

WATN 2015 ♦ DREW HENSON ♦ DOLPH LUNDGREN ♦ JOSE CANSECO ♦ CHERYL MILLER ♦ DON KING

# Where Are They Now?

**PET  
PROJECT**  
**THE STRAYS  
OF SOCHI**  
P. 92



# Sports Illustrated

## Brett Favre

*On Whether HE COULD STILL PLAY,  
HEAD INJURIES, AARON RODGERS  
And This Month's DRAMATIC  
RETURN TO GREEN BAY*

**BY GREG BISHOP** P. 42

and his  
**DOG  
SAM**

**PLUS**

50

### WWE MANIA

*Hulk, Sgt. Slaughter,  
Tito Santana,  
Madusa, More!*

**BY KOSTYA KENNEDY**

102

### THE BAHA MEN

*Because Of Course,  
The Baha Men!  
(Woof, Woof,  
Woof, Woof)*

**BY BEN REITER**

118


### KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR

*The Public Life  
And Times of an  
Intellectual*

**BY ALEXANDER WOLFF**







YOU MIGHT NOT NEED IT.

BUT CAN YOU LIVE WITHOUT IT?

*zoom-zoom*



2016 MAZDA MX-5 MIATA | DRIVING MATTERS™





YOU LOSE A LOT  
**WHEN YOU SWEAT**  
BUT REFUSE TO LOSE  
AT THE FINISH LINE



**EVERYTHING YOU NEED  
TO KEEP SWEATING.**

**CARBOHYDRATES TO COMPETE.  
ELECTROLYTES TO REPLENISH.**

©2011 S-V-C, Inc. GATORADE and the G BOLT Design are registered trademarks of S-V-C, Inc.







A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a person's face, focusing on the eye and sunglasses. The person has light skin and dark hair. They are wearing dark-framed sunglasses with a gold-colored bridge and temples. The lenses are a vibrant, reflective green. The person's eye is visible through the lens, looking slightly to the side. The lighting is bright, creating strong highlights and shadows on the skin and the sunglasses.

## **SUNBLOCK NEVER LOOKED THIS GOOD**

Your eyes get sunburned just like your skin, that's why you need to protect them. At LensCrafters, we can fit your prescription into nearly any pair of glasses for protection with style.

**LENSCRAFTERS®**





# LINEUP

7.6-13.2015 | VOLUME 123 | NO. 1

2015 SUMMER DOUBLE ISSUE

ON THE COVER:

Mark Tucker for Sports Illustrated

## Where Are They Now?

42

**Brett Favre**

The Gunslinger in retirement—really  
BY GREG BISHOP

50

**WWE Mania**

Aging lords of the ring reunite  
BY KOSTYA KENNEDY

58

**Jose Canseco**

Infamy, guns and dingers  
BY JACK DICKEY

64

**Marlin Briscoe**

The wild ride of a trailblazing QB  
BY PHIL TAYLOR

70

**Drew Henson**

A two-sport phenom turned scout  
BY PETE THAMEL

74

**Chairmen of the Cardboard**

Way back when, they struck a pose  
BY BEN BASKIN

80

**Cheryl Miller**

The greatest player's latest stop  
BY JOAN NIESEN

84

**MLS Pioneers**

Remembering the birth of a league  
BY ALEXANDER ABNOS

92

**The Strays of Sochi**

The best Olympic souvenirs of all  
BY MARK BEECH

96

**Don King**

A boxing original in his twilight  
BY CHRIS MANNIX

102

**Baha Men**

The lasting legacy of a cheesy hit  
BY BEN REITER

108

**Dolph Lundgren**

From MIT to *Rocky IV*—and beyond  
BY CHRIS NASHAWATY

112

**Tommy John Casualties**

Moving on when the surgery fails  
BY STEPHANIE APSTEIN

118

**Kareem Abdul-Jabbar**

The development of an intellectual  
BY ALEXANDER WOLFF

### Departments

6 **SI NOW**

8 **Inbox**

10 **Leading Off**

20 **Scorecard**

24 **Faces in the Crowd**

34 **Just My Type**

*Dan Patrick:* Frank Kaminsky on minivans and Michael Jordan

124 **Point After**

*Steve Rushin:* The nostalgia-sports connection (updated)

### HAIR APPARENT

King's coif and catchphrase remain instantly recognizable, even if he no longer carries heavyweight clout.

Photograph by Kevin Liles  
For Sports Illustrated



# Sports Illustrated





## ■ KEITH HERNANDEZ

**The five-time All-Star first baseman sat down with Maggie Gray to discuss why the Mets are struggling and the latest allegations about Pete Rose's gambling.**

**MAGGIE GRAY:** *It's been a tough month of June for the Mets. How can they pull themselves out of this funk?*

**KEITH HERNANDEZ:** Well, they can [start] by getting around 10 guys off the disabled list. I've never seen a team so racked with injuries. They've got a lot of minor league players who really wouldn't be here [if not for the injured players]. When you have a team that has too many guys

who are really minor league players and are not ready for the big league level, it's tough. **MG:** *We just found out that there's information confirming what a lot of baseball fans already thought: that Pete Rose bet on baseball while he was a player. Is that shocking to you?*

**KH:** I don't know what's going on there, but I know it's not [just about] the gambling.

*"We were told that if you gambled, you would be suspended for life."*

**—Keith Hernandez**

When we were 18 years old, two FBI agents and a guy from the security office or the commissioner's office came in and talked to all the minor leaguers. Every year they came and talked to everybody as a group. We were told that if you gambled, you would be suspended for life. So those are things everybody knew. Pete was a great player. He was one of the greatest players I ever played against. He was a winner. He was infectious—one of the rare players who made people better around him. Is he a Hall of Famer? Well, I think so, but it's up to the commissioner. It just seems to me that there are people out there who are adamant about him not getting in. But maybe they've got a case.

*For more of Hernandez's interview, plus the SI Now archive, go to [SI.com/sinow](http://SI.com/sinow)*

## TUNE IN



▶ **EPISODE: JUNE 22**

Tigers pitcher **David Price** discusses how he is motivated by a love of the game.



▶ **EPISODE: JUNE 23**

Seahawks fullback **Derrick Coleman** explains that being deaf hasn't held him back on the football field.



▶ **EPISODE: JUNE 24**

Michael McCann details scenarios in which **Tom Brady** could sue the NFL.



▶ **EPISODE: JUNE 25**

Former Duke forward and NBA All-Star **Luol Deng** tells how **Coach K** prepares players for the NBA.





## NICE THREADS

*See the Great. Feel the Great.*

It's the warmth of beautifully stitched genuine leather that fits the hand naturally. It's a 5.5" IPS Quantum QuadHD display and 16 MP camera with an f/1.8 lens underneath it. It's a smartphone that performs as beautifully as it looks. It's the all-new G4 from LG.

# LG G4

[www.LG.com/G4](http://www.LG.com/G4)

Qualcomm  
snapdragon



©2015 LG Electronics U.S.A. Inc. All rights reserved. LG and Life's Good are registered trademarks of LG Corp. Other trademarks and trade names are property of their respective owners. Screen images simulated. Design, interface & color options may vary depending on carrier. Qualcomm and Snapdragon are trademarks of Qualcomm Incorporated, registered in the United States and other countries. Used with permission.



# INBOX

FOR JUNE 22, 2015

NBC Sports Group chairman Mark Lazarus was way off the mark when he suggested that NHL players should stop growing playoff beards. The playoff beard is a great tradition that fans have come to appreciate. Instead of trying to change hockey, NBC should be promoting the uniqueness of the sport.

Jack Nally, Erie, Pa.



While I applaud the Blackhawks for their Stanley Cup victory, perhaps the article by L. Jon Wertheim and Ken Rodriguez on the heroin epidemic should have merited the cover. Most fans are aware of who won the Cup, but many are unaware of how heroin addiction among athletes is growing.

Carol O'Neill, Cherry Hill, N.J.

The idea that baseball player Michael Duran "hardly fit the profile of an addict" because he "spent hours hitting balls in a batting cage" is misleading. Being overly persistent is sometimes a sign of obsessive compulsive behavior, or worse.

Bob Halper, Chagrin Falls, Ohio

In Chris Mannix's otherwise excellent article on the Nuggets' new draft pick, guard Emmanuel Mudiay, a scout refers to Mudiay's stint in China as a "wasted year." I wouldn't consider playing with professionals while making money to help support his family after his father's death to be a waste.

Jonathan Fiskus, Bronx, N.Y.



COVER

Three Stanley Cups in six seasons make a dynasty? The real modern dynasty is the Red Wings, who won the Cup three times between 1997 and 2002, and then again in '08?

Brian June  
Indianapolis



PAGE 2

## SI NOW

Thanks for the interview with Mr. T. Both he and the film *Rocky* are reminders of a time when the only weapon a kid brought to school to settle an argument was a fist, and the punishment wasn't jail but the principal's office.

David J. Gross  
St. Augustine, Fla.



PAGE 72

## POINT AFTER

I think Steve Rushin's article about his neighbor David Quenah was one of the most inspiring things I have ever read in SI. Hopefully it will have the same affect on my sons as it did on me.

Tim Wegman  
Clive, Iowa

CONTACT  
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

Letters E-mail SI at [letters@SI.timeinc.com](mailto:letters@SI.timeinc.com) or fax SI at 212-467-2417. Letters should include the writer's full name, address and home telephone number and may be edited for clarity and space. **Customer Service and Subscriptions** For 24/7 service, go to [SI.com/customerservice](http://SI.com/customerservice). Call 1-800-528-5000 or write to SI at P.O. Box 30602, Tampa, FL 33630-0602. To purchase reprints of SI covers, go to [SIcovers.com](http://SIcovers.com). **Advertising** For ad rates, an editorial calendar or a media kit, email SI at [SIpubqueries@timeinc.com](mailto:SIpubqueries@timeinc.com).





## WELL ARMED

The LG Watch Urbane, the Genuine Smartpiece. Equipped with Android Wear, it can send texts, deliver notifications, give turn-by-turn directions, sync and play your favorite tracks, and more. With its interchangeable leatherstraps and classic gold or silver finishes, it proves the future of innovation can indeed be timeless.

android wear

*Genuine Smartpiece*

**LG Watch Urbane**







**Leading  
Off**

+

1  
of  
3



## Head Honcho

■ U.S. midfielder Carli Lloyd (10) outjumped China's Zhao Rong (14) and drove a 51st-minute header past keeper Wang Fei to secure a 1-0 victory in their Women's World Cup quarterfinal match in Ottawa last Friday. Lloyd's goal came in her 200th national-team appearance, a game that fellow midfielders Lauren Holiday and Megan Rapinoe had to miss because of yellow cards. The U.S. moved on to face top-ranked Germany on Tuesday.

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
**LARS BARON**

FIFA/GETTY IMAGES

INSET: QIN LANG/XINHUA/  
ZUMAPRESS.COM











Leading  
Off

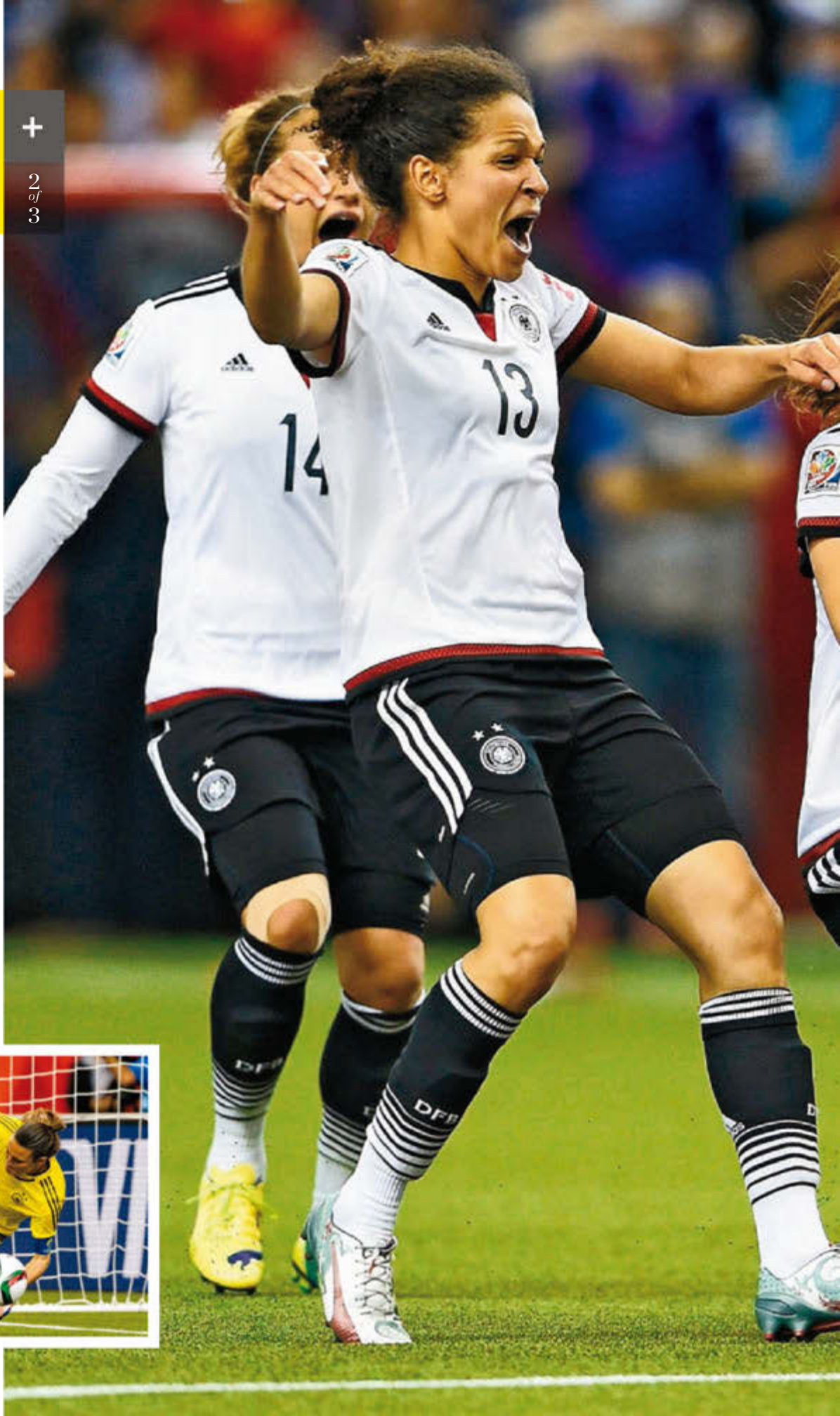
+

2  
of  
3

## Deutsch Treat

■ Germany midfielder Sara Daebritz (23) rushed to embrace Nadine Angerer after her penalty-kick save iced a win over France in the WWC quarterfinals last Friday in Montreal. The French led 1-0 until the 84th minute, when forward Celia Sasic (13) buried a kick from the spot after a hand ball in the box. Neither team scored in extra time, and each converted its first four PKs before Angerer stopped Claire Lavogez's try.

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
**DENNIS  
GROMBKOWSKI**  
BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES  
INSET: MINAS  
PANAGIOTAKIS/GETTY  
IMAGES











**Leading  
Off**

+

3  
of  
3

## Mana Mania

■ Japan forward Mana Iwabuchi (16) snapped a scoreless tie in the 87th minute—and broke the will of Elise Kellond-Knight (on ground) and upset-minded Australia—in Edmonton last Saturday. After entering the match 15 minutes earlier, Iwabuchi pounced on a loose ball in front of the goal. The 1-0 victory was the eighth straight in World Cup play for the defending champs and set up a semifinal showdown with England on Wednesday.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
**KEVIN C. COX**  
GETTY IMAGES







Edited by JIM GORANT + TED KEITH

# SCORECARD

## Jackpot Summer

For the first time in forever, two stars are halfway to achieving the ultimate goal in their sports. Enjoy it while you can

BY MICHAEL ROSENBERG

**EVEN BEFORE** flying to Great Britain, Jordan Spieth and Serena Williams were already halfway home. Each has completed 50% of a Grand Slam—Spieth by winning golf's Masters and U.S. Open, and Williams by winning tennis's Australian and French Opens.

In the theater of sports, Williams (who has July 11, the date of the Wimbledon women's final, circled on her calendar) and Spieth (who can win the British Open eight days later) now share a stage. But on the playing surfaces, there is a big difference in their quests. Williams is on a mission. Spieth is on mission impossible.

Perhaps *impossible* is too strong. But if you're betting the house on a Spieth Slam, we sure hope you own

another house. Spieth's Grand Slam dream is so unlikely that if he actually pulls it off, it would be the greatest achievement in the history of his sport.

Spieth is an undeniably great player, a rare combination of talent, intelligence, patience and confidence. But golf doesn't submit to dominance. There are too many variables, too many kinds of courses and too many good players competing at once.

Only one other golfer has won a calendar-year Grand Slam: Bobby Jones, who did it in 1930. Back then the Grand Slam consisted of the U.S. Open, British Open, U.S. Amateur and British Amateur. Jones had not even founded the Masters yet. It's fair to say the competition is stiffer these days.

Since Jones won his

Slam, only three players have even won *three* straight: Ben Hogan, Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods. Hogan picked off a trio in 1953, but he had to skip the PGA in order to get to the British, and he lost his next major, the '54 Masters, in a playoff. Nicklaus lost his chance at a Jack Slam when Lee Trevino beat him by a stroke at the British in 1972.

Woods actually won four in a row, the U.S. Open, British Open and PGA in 2000, followed by the '01 Masters. But a Spieth Slam would be more stunning than that Tiger Slam because of Spieth's age.

Woods had already won two majors when his Slam began, and he was a 26-year-old in his fifth full PGA Tour season when it ended. Spieth will turn 22 on July 27. He did not even

qualify for the Masters until 2014, and he did not win a major until April. If he essentially opens his career with four straight major championships, it would be like a newborn baby walking out of the hospital.

Woods completed his Slam largely because he had an unprecedented margin for error. He was far superior to anybody else in the field—he won the U.S. Open by 15 strokes and the British by eight. Spieth is terrific. He just isn't as dominant as Woods was.

But Williams is.

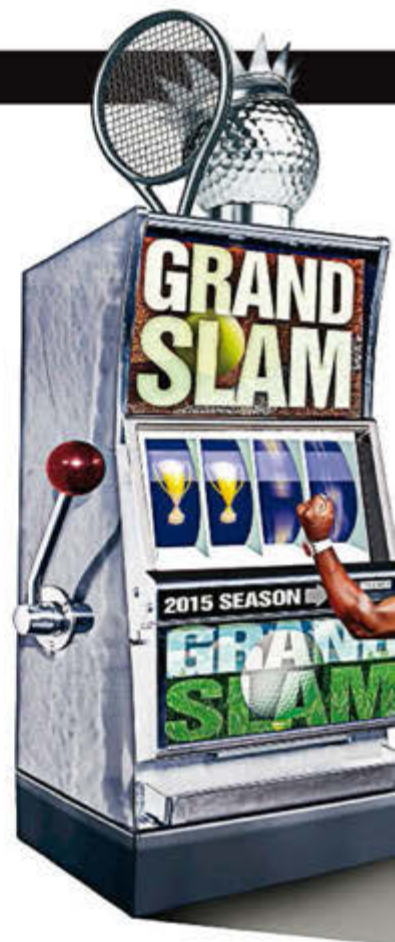


ILLUSTRATION BY D'ARROW





Williams has not quite gotten her due in the modern media climate, where all the takes are hot. Critics often use her talent against her, as they do with LeBron James; like James, Williams has been so great that people wonder why she isn't even better. At times she looks as if she should not only win every match, but every set and every game.

Still, her career matches up with any in women's tennis history, and a Grand Slam would feel like the natural culmination. Williams has already

captured, for her, the most difficult piece of the Slam: the French, where clay courts limit the potency of her serve. What remains is Wimbledon, which she has won five times, and the U.S. Open, which she has won six times. If she prevails in both, she will be tennis's first Grand Slam winner since Steffi Graf in 1988.

Nobody is saying it will be easy. But Williams might make it look easy.

At the Old Course—and, if he wins there, at the PGA in August—Spieth will have to battle nerves with every shot, especially on the weekend. Williams plays with the knowledge that a mis-hit in tennis is not nearly as devastating as one mis-hit in golf—

and with the confidence of a woman who has done this before.

In 2002–03, Williams completed the Serena Slam, four straight majors across two calendar years. If she wins Wimbledon this month, that would give her yet another Serena Slam. And then she would head to New York in late August riding a pair of ridiculous streaks: four straight majors, and three straight U.S. Open championships. This could be the Summer of Spieth. It is far more likely to be the Summer of Serena. □

## GO FIGURE

# 4



RBI's for Mets pitcher **Steven Matz** on Sunday in his major league debut, the most ever by a pitcher in his first game. Matz went 3 for 3 against the Reds while allowing just two runs over  $7\frac{2}{3}$  innings in New York's 7-2 win.



**3** NBA teams veteran guard **Luke Ridnour** was traded by in a 25-hour span on June 24 and 25. Ridnour, 34, was dealt from the Timberwolves to the Grizzlies, who then moved him to the Hornets. Hours later Charlotte traded him to the Thunder.

## \$1.45 billion

Amount paid by Discovery Networks for Olympic rights in Europe across all platforms for the Games from 2018 to '24 (France for '22 and '24 only). The deal is the first time one broadcaster will hold the rights across the continent, and through its subsidiary, Eurosport, Discovery expects to reach 700 million people during the Games.

# 60

Years since an ACC team won the Division I baseball championship before Virginia did so on June 24, beating Vanderbilt two games to one in a rematch of last year's final. Four current ACC teams have lost in the finals since Wake Forest won the league's only previous title in 1955.



## FLYING

+



## Jet Stet

An SI editor takes off

Do-do-do, do-de-do...

I'm 1,000 feet over Long Island Sound, hearing my pilot hum as absentmindedly as a hansom cab driver trotting through Central Park. But this is no 747 circling LaGuardia. We're in a twin-seat L-39C Albatros military trainer jet, flying with the seven-man Breitling Jet Team, the world's largest professional civilian jet aerobatics squad. The singing airman—Bernard Charbonnel, a 55-year-old former French air force pilot—is about to pull us into a vertical loop: essentially a 360-degree

roller-coaster circle, only at more than 400 mph. "O.K., Steve," Charbo says over my headset, "you might feel a little something now."

Little something, right: We are buffeted by four times the normal force of gravity and the equilibrium-destroying sensation that comes when the sun passes over your feet and the blood that should be in your head pools in your toes.

Charbonnel was giving me a firsthand taste of what the Swiss-based BJT, which this summer is on its first North American tour, does every day. It's more than a thrill ride. Charbonnel and



## High Times

Cannella (left) and Charbo pose postflight.

the other team members—a group of impossibly dashing Frenchmen who have been flying together for 15 years—are high-speed, high-altitude athletes, flipping and rolling their 7,500-pound jets in formation and in unison, with wingtips usually less than 10 feet apart. Says Charbonnel, "Our greatest skill is trusting each other." —Stephen Cannella

To read more and see a video of the flight, go to [SI.com/jets](http://SI.com/jets)



## SIGN OF THE APOCALYPSE

The day after being the 18th pick in the NBA draft (Rockets), Sam Dekker was home in Sheboygan, Wis., **mowing the family lawn.**



## Fanaticus

**Justine Gubar**  
ESPN producer's academic but searching inquest into fan misbehavior, tracing its history, psychology and horrific moments.  
#looking@osu



## Molina

**Benjie Molina with Joan Ryan**  
Surprisingly sensitive and well-written tale of family, commitment and baseball from the oldest of the big league catching bros.  
#sixrings



## The Pine Tar Game

**Filip Bondy**  
A sticky moment milked for all its nutty, head-shaking glory, although the theory that it holds a deeper symbolism feels forced.  
#dirtyplay



## Still Throwing Heat

**J.R. Richard and Lew Freedman**  
Astros righty gives a straightforward account of how he went from the All-Star Game to living under an overpass to preaching.  
#fireballer



BOOKS

TWEETABLE  
REVIEWS





## # have KINDLE will TRAVEL

@KDKUIPER, BANGKOK | Amazon asked if I'd bring the Kindle Paperwhite on my trip to Thailand. After wandering the crowded streets of Bangkok, I found my way to the floating market on the Chao Phraya river and got lost in the Sonchai Jitpleecheep series.

Follow more journeys on Instagram @AMAZONKINDLE



kindle

amazon

THEY  
SAID IT

“THEY’RE  
HEALTHY,  
SO IF ONE  
IS GOOD,  
17 HAS TO  
BE REALLY  
GOOD.”

**Terry Francona**

Indians manager trying  
to rationalize a recent  
17-popsicle binge.

**Andra Espinoza-Hunter** | *Ossining, N.Y.* | *Basketball*

Andra, a 5' 10" rising junior guard at Blair Academy in Blairstown, N.J., scored 16 points to pace the U.S. to an 80-48 win over Argentina to open the FIBA Americas U-16 tournament in Puebla, Mexico. She averaged 18.6 points this season in leading Blair to a fifth straight Class A prep school title. Andra has verbally committed to UConn.

**Kumar Nambiar** | *Mamaroneck, N.Y.* | *Baseball*

Kumar, a senior lefthander and two-time captain at Mamaroneck High, hurled a three-hit, 4-2 win over Connetquot High to lead the Tigers to the Class 2A final, where they beat Saratoga Springs High 9-2 for their third title in eight years. Kumar finished 10-0 with an 0.98 ERA and 97 strikeouts in 78 innings. He will play at Yale.

**Ashley Bauer** | *New Albany, Ohio* | *Rowing*

Bauer, a senior at Ohio State, led the Buckeyes to an unprecedented third consecutive Division I title with a victory in Gold River, Calif. A three-year member of the first varsity eight, she rowed in the five seat and powered her boat to a second straight undefeated season. She was named the school's female athlete of the year and the Big Ten rower of the year.

## FACES IN THE CROWD

Edited by ALEXANDRA FENWICK

**Josh Sborz** | *McLean, Va.* | *Baseball*

Sborz, a righthanded junior reliever at Virginia, pitched 13 scoreless innings in four College World Series appearances, going 3-0 with a save to lead the Cavaliers to the championship game, where they beat Vanderbilt 4-2. He was named the Series' most outstanding player. Sborz finished with a 1.60 ERA and was drafted 74th by the Dodgers.

**Meehra Nelson** | *Westlake Village, Calif.* | *Softball*

Meehra, a senior righthander at Westlake High, threw 40 consecutive scoreless innings over her final four games, fanning 75 and allowing only six hits to propel the Warriors to the Southern Section Division 2 semifinals. Her streak included a school-record 23 K's in a 12-inning, 1-0 playoff victory over La Habra High. Meehra will pitch at Oregon State.

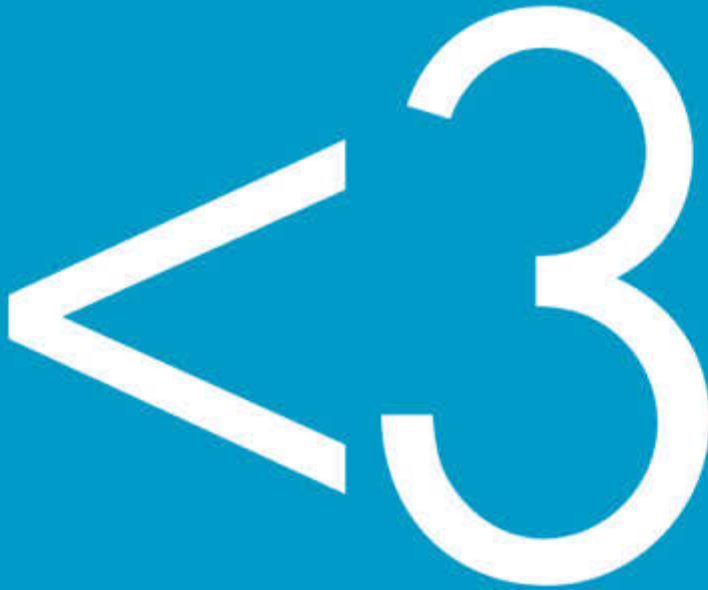
**Austin Lehmann** | *Fayetteville, N.C.* | *Basketball*

Lehmann, 65, and a phys-ed teacher at Lake Rim Elementary in Fayetteville, sank his one millionth free throw in front of the student body on June 5. For five years and 37 days he woke daily at 4 a.m. to shoot for an hour and a half, averaging 537 makes. Lehmann was a point guard at New Mexico State and Southeastern Oklahoma State.

Nominate Now ▼

To submit a candidate for Faces in the Crowd, go to [SI.com/faces](http://SI.com/faces).  
For more on outstanding amateur athletes, follow [@SI\\_Faces](https://twitter.com/SI_Faces) on Twitter.





LOVE

YOUR BALLS

**TCF** TESTICULAR CANCER  
FOUNDATION  
AWARENESS. EDUCATION. SUPPORT.

A monthly self-exam can save your life. [tcancer.org](http://tcancer.org)

## CATCHING UP WITH

+  
**Michael Chang**

Fifteen years after his last victory, he's still chasing titles

**IN THE WEEKS** after 17-year-old Michael Chang became the youngest male to win a Grand Slam title, the 1989 French Open, he struggled to prepare for Wimbledon. Twenty-six years later Chang, 43, is still working on grass-court strategies and techniques—not to hone his own game but as the coach of the world's fifth-ranked player, Kei Nishikori of Japan.

Though he sees himself in Nishikori's game, Chang is not recommending Nishikori employ the audacious underhand serve he used to defeat Ivan Lendl at Roland Garros in '89. Nishikori, like Chang, relies on speed and steadiness, and while Chang was a master of clay, he never solved grass. Over his career he was 38–15 at the French Open and 18–14 at Wimbledon. Chang is schooling Nishikori, 25, on overcoming adversity on the court, using Serena Williams as a model of how “he doesn't need to be 100% to win.”

Chang travels to tournaments with his wife, Amber—who's expecting their third child in mid-July—and their daughters Lani, 4, and Maile, 2, about 25 weeks of the year. He still burns to win, but since retiring in 2003 he has gained perspective. Says Chang, “I'm grateful for the championships and titles, but I've also realized there are more important things.” —*Jamie Lisanti*



***“If you hit it properly, it's actually not a very easy serve to return, so it could be used to take the opponent by surprise. But etiquette-wise, I don't think it would go over so well.”***

✦ On the underhand serve he used to beat then No. 1 Lendl at the French in '89

*“You have to get used to the footing and the fact that you're not hearing the ball bounce as on clay or hard courts.”*

✦ On training for the grass of Wimbledon

*“Balls bounce higher, the court is slower and rallies are longer than they used to be.”*

✦ On how grass courts have changed

***“I never would've expected it, but it's a lot more kicked-back—it's fun and we get along quite well.”***

✦ On coaching against old rivals such as Boris Becker and Stefan Edberg

*“You must learn the hard way.”*

✦ Advice for young players who haven't yet developed the patience and work ethic to succeed



JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES (TOP); STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES (HITTING)



**“BEING MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY PREPARED ALLOWS YOU TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LIFE'S POSSIBILITIES.”**

– Brandi Chastain, U.S. Professional Soccer Player and Coach

Learn how Brandi keeps her competitive edge at  
**SI.com/RealPossibilities**

**AARP**  
Real Possibilities



IF YOU DON'T THINK  
“**TOP OF MY GAME**”  
WHEN YOU THINK AARP

THEN YOU DON'T KNOW  
“**aarp**”



Real Possibilities is a trademark of AARP.

Help keep your mind healthy and active with AARP's Staying Sharp. Get engaged with specially selected online brain games that adapt to your skill level. Staying Sharp offers specific actions you can take each day that complement your lifestyle and provides actionable tips that can help keep your brain in shape and ready for the *Real Possibilities* ahead.

Find more surprising possibilities and get to know us at [aarp.org/possibilities](https://aarp.org/possibilities)



A SERIES  
FROM THE  
EDITORS OF  
**FORTUNE**  
AND  
**Sports Illustrated**

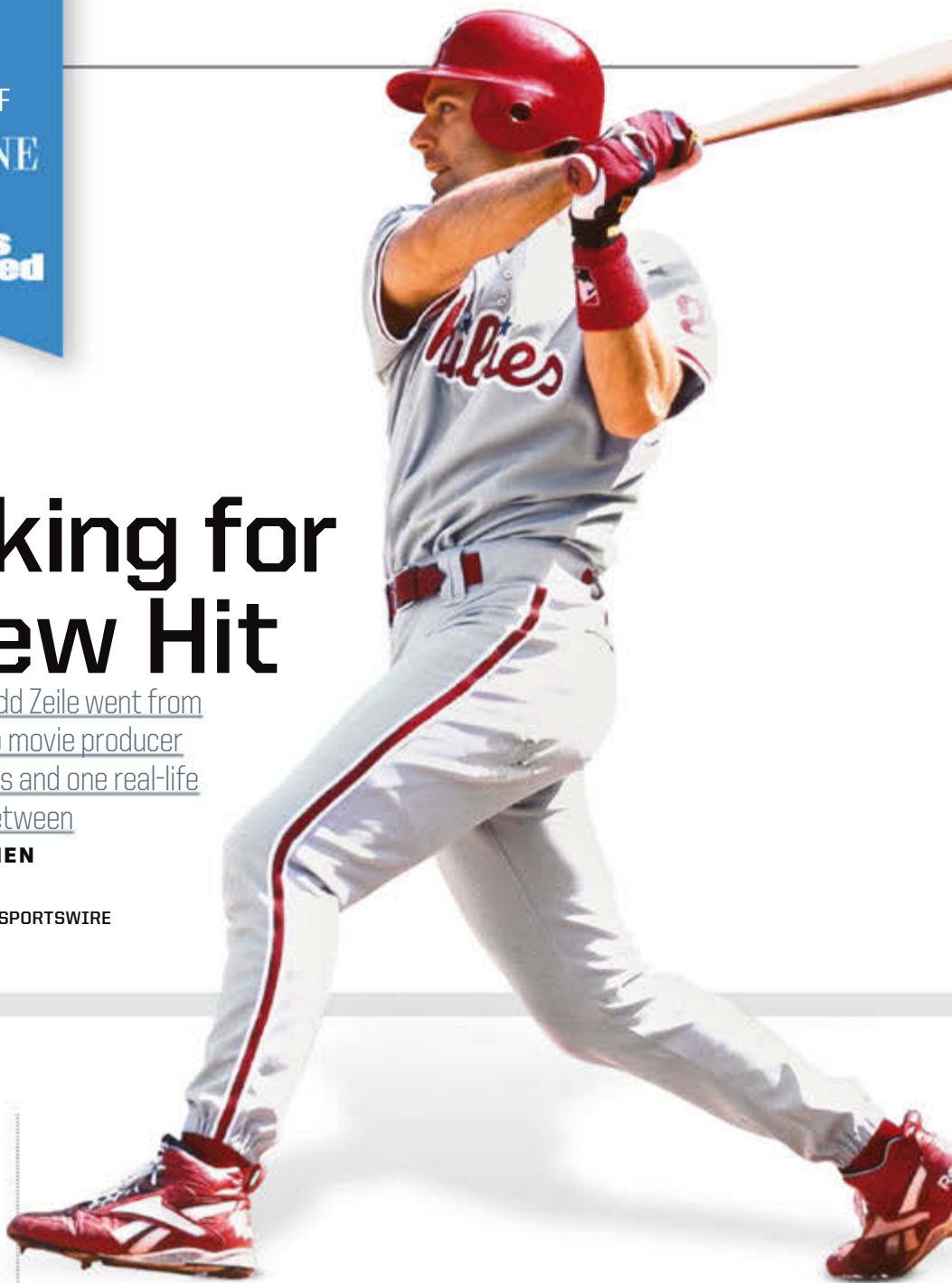
PRO-FILES

# Looking for A New Hit

Baseball vet Todd Zeile went from  
run producer to movie producer  
with a few stops and one real-life  
bromance in-between

**BY ALBERT CHEN**

*Photograph by*  
**DAVID SEELIG/ICON SPORTSWIRE**



**TODD ZEILE IS** telling a story about going to Scotland a few years ago with Charlie Sheen in search of the Loch Ness monster. “We stayed in an old castle on the loch, and one night we went out on this tiny wooden rowboat with a bottle of Scotch. I did the rowing. About four in the morning we were out in this channel, looking around, listening to music, telling stories. It was cold and dark. Calm—but kind of ominous,” he says, letting the words

hang until he’s asked a question: Were there any sightings? “Well, Charlie will tell you we almost got capsized because of a very mysterious undercurrent.”

It’s a radiant May afternoon in the San Fernando Valley, and Zeile is having lunch on a terrace overlooking

a spread of manicured tennis courts at Sherwood Country Club. The tale of his Highlands escapade is more than an explanation of how a mild-mannered major leaguer became bros with one of Hollywood’s occasionally unhinged hedonists. It’s an illustration of how a

sense of curiosity and a willingness to try things have guided one man’s postbaseball success.

When Zeile retired from the Mets in 2004, he moved back to the Los Angeles area, where he’d grown up. He had no interest in the traditional baseball afterlife: a gig





Zeile wasn't merely a bystander, though. He was one of the top power-hitting infielders of the late 1990s and eventually amassed 253 homers and 2,004 career hits. In his final game, on Oct. 3, 2004, at Shea, he hit a home run in his final at bat, becoming only the 40th player to do so. It was a Hollywood ending to a career that lasted longer than anyone expected when Zeile was drafted by the Cardinals as a catcher out of UCLA in 1986. "Joe Garagiola used to come around telling us that it's a blink of an eye from the All-Star Game to the Old-Timers' Game," says

Aviation Consultants Incorporated. When Zeile signed on, ACI had one turboprop and one small jet. Today the company owns 10 aircraft—including Citations and Gulf Streams. Says Borgsmiller, "Nothing rattles Todd. He never wavers, he's always calm, and as you go through ups and downs, that's a very good thing. He brings the same value to a business as he did to a ball club."

While playing for the Mets, Zeile also began to dabble in the movie business. He backed *Dirty Deeds*, a comedy produced by some longtime acquaintances. Zeile became an executive producer and had a bit part—as a mullet-wearing street bum. "I thought, Hey, this is fun, this is cool, this gives me something to transition into," he says. "It's easy to get swept away by the romanticism of it. In Hollywood everyone gets excited, everyone says yes to everything, everything's great—until it's suddenly like, Uh-oh, what just happened?"

*Dirty Deeds*, which was "made for three times what the budget should have been," says Zeile, was critically panned, struggled to find an audience and never recouped the money. "It just wasn't a good movie," he says. "It was a great education but a costly one. I lost more than I would have paid in tuition if I'd gone to film school for 10 years."

**"It wasn't a good movie," Zeile says of one venture. "It was a great education but a costly one. I lost more than I would have paid in tuition if I'd gone to film school for 10 years."**

as a big league coach or a TV talking head. "Some guys eat, breathe and sleep baseball 24/7, but I always had other things I wanted to do," he says.

He jumped into real estate, tried his hand as an entrepreneur and dabbled in the local pastime—working as a film and TV producer. He has learned that if there's one thing as hard as making it in the big leagues, it's making it in Hollywood. "Taking a broadcast job, spending your days on the golf course—that's the expected route," he says. "I went against the grain."

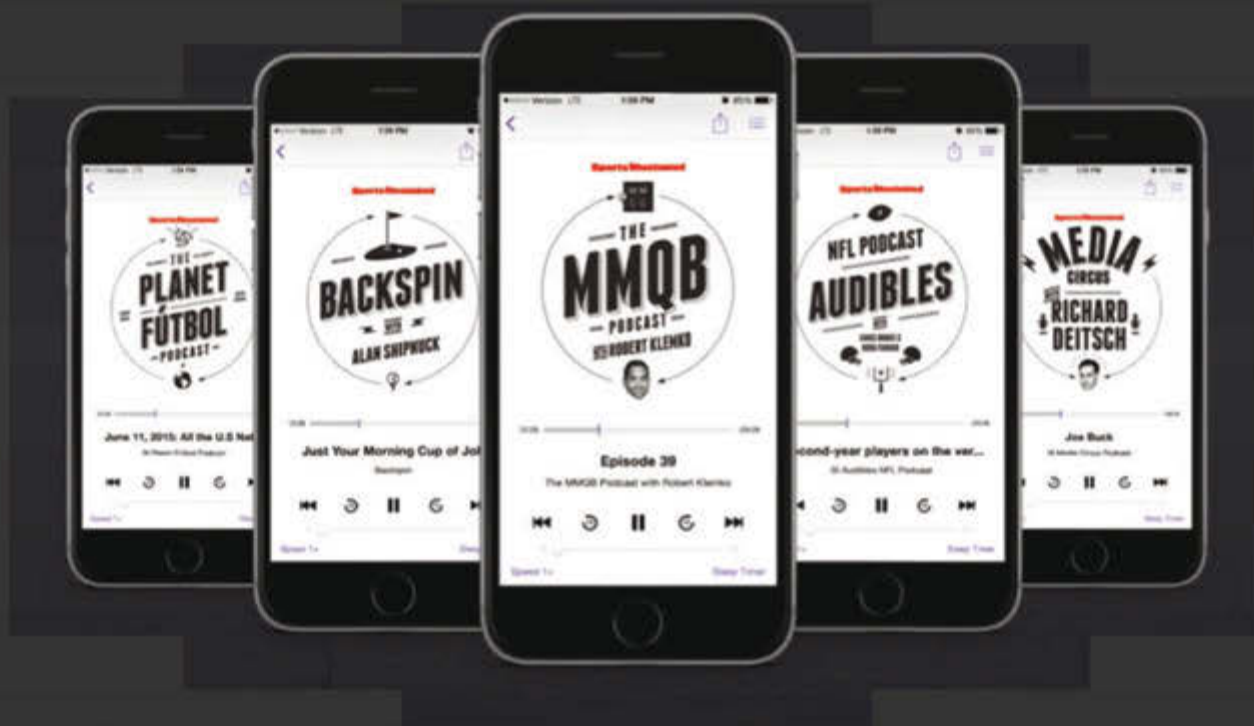
**JOE TORRE CALLS** Zeile the Forrest Gump of baseball. Over 16 seasons Zeile played mostly third base or first base for 11 teams, for some of the game's most successful managers (Whitey Herzog, Jim Leyland, Torre), and, like Gump, he was witness to many notable moments. He was on deck in Toronto when second baseman Roberto Alomar spit on umpire John Hirschbeck. He had eight hits for the Mets during the 2000 Subway Series and was still on New York's roster the night baseball returned to the city after 9/11.

Zeile. "We'd all kind of roll our eyes. But there's a lot of truth to it."

Zeile made his first foray into the business world while he was still playing. During the 2002 season, after he was traded from the Mets to the Rockies, he wondered how best to arrange for his then wife—U.S. Olympic gold medal gymnast Julianne McNamara—and four kids to visit. He had the idea of starting a company that would charter flights for athletes and celebrities. He partnered with Bill Borgsmiller, the president of a small aviation company,

# SPORTS ILLUSTRATED PODCAST NETWORK

Get more on the latest news and the hottest topics from around the sports world with the new Sports Illustrated Podcast Network.



## Featured Guests:



David Price



Joe Buck



Pedro Martinez



Brett Favre



Vijay Singh

Each week Sports Illustrated will broadcast a series of free audio shows on your favorite sports, including the NFL, MLB, golf, soccer and tennis.

Go to [si.com/podcasts](http://si.com/podcasts) to see the full lineup.



## ONE FRIGID NIGHT

ONE in Los Angeles 18 years ago, Zeile was in the Dodger Stadium tunnel warming up his hands before a first-inning at bat when he heard a voice from behind him: “Dude, can you point me to my seat?” It was Charlie Sheen, who had straggled in from the parking lot. Sheen, a big baseball fan (“he basically sits at home and watches MLB Network all day,” says Zeile), knew who Zeile was, and Zeile was a fan of Sheen’s work. The two shook hands, and moments later, before Zeile stepped to the plate, he blurted to his teammate Todd Hollandsworth, “Dude, I just met Charlie Sheen in the tunnel!” Zeile homered as Sheen was taking his seat, “and to this day,” Zeile says, “Charlie thinks, as the guy who last touched my hand, he was responsible.”

The two bumped into each other a few years later at a movie premiere. They began hanging out and became close friends and creative collaborators. Over the years they’ve played catch alongside that loch in Scotland, on thousand-year-old glaciers in Alaska and while swimming with dolphins in Cabo, as well as at countless ballparks across the country. “People don’t get it,” Zeile says of their relationship. “I’ve never been a partyer. I don’t drink. But for whatever reason, I became a solid influence for Charlie—he kind of loses sight of things sometimes, and I ground him a bit.”



## TWO AND NO HALF MEN

Zeile played for 11 clubs during his 19-year career and met Sheen (far left) during a stint with the Dodgers. After the success of *Anger Management*, the pair is talking about new deals.

A few years ago, when Zeile was looking for his next project after producing his second film, *I Am*, a religious-themed movie that screened at 2,500 churches across six continents, Zeile threw out an idea for a show in which a former baseball player is dealing with life after the game. Sheen loved it. He was on his hit series, *Two and a Half Men*, but CBS had shut down production after Sheen began making outlandish contract demands and daily headlines for his bizarre online rants.

When Sheen hit the road on a rehabilitation tour, performing variety shows for packed crowds across the country, Zeile was on the bus with him coming up with bits. During the tour,

Sheen was fired from *Two and a Half Men*, and while pondering his next move, he reconsidered Zeile’s baseball idea. The two retuned it, and it eventually became fodder for *Anger Management*, Sheen’s show on FX in which he plays an ex-baseball player turned therapist. Zeile was on set every day for the pilot to keep Sheen focused and chime in on ideas, and was a co-executive producer for 80 episodes. The pilot, which aired in June 2012, was a hit: It attracted 5.74 million viewers, making it the

most-watched sitcom premiere in cable history. The show had a breathless run—100 episodes over two years—before it ended last December.

Zeile has since been juggling projects. He and Sheen have begun talking about new film and TV (non-sitcom) projects. Zeile is also working with the G2 investment group on an initiative to bring water-purification products to developing countries. (He is spending a week in Africa this summer, meeting with dignitaries there.) He and McNamara divorced in January 2015, and he’s trying to keep up with his children, who range in age from 11 to 21. At the same time, he’s maintaining a long-distance relationship with girlfriend Kristin Gamboa, the daughter of Brooklyn Cyclones manager Tom Gamboa.

Zeile hasn’t ruled out a return to baseball. He still has friends around the game—he talks all the time to Robin Ventura, who went from his couch to the manager’s chair in Chicago a few years ago—and he knows that an offer that’s too good to pass up could come along.

For the moment, though, he’s still hustling, searching for his big hit, as he did for all those years in baseball. “A part of the reason I took this route was to prove that there’s more to me than being an athlete,” he says. “Things would have been easier if I’d done it the traditional way. But I can say that all this has led to some interesting adventures.” □

## SI.COM

To watch a video about Todd Zeile and to see the entire Pro-Files video series, go to [SI.com/pro-files](http://SI.com/pro-files)



# JUST MY TYPE

→ Interview by **DAN PATRICK**

**DAN PATRICK:** *Where did you think you were headed?*

**FRANK KAMINSKY:** I had a good indication Charlotte was going to be the spot before the draft based on what my agent had heard.

**DP:** *Did you meet with [Hornets owner] Michael Jordan?*

**FK:** I have not yet.

**DP:** *Have you talked to him?*

**FK:** I have not yet.

**DP:** *Did you visit Charlotte?*

**FK:** I didn't.

**DP:** *They didn't work you out. You haven't talked to Jordan. Other than that, how does it feel?*

**FK:** Everything else is going pretty well. No complaints.

**DP:** *Who calls you to tell you that the Hornets are taking you?*

**FK:** My agent told me. They're sneaky with the cameras at your table, and then a lady comes behind you with the hat.

**DP:** *So you can tell something is going on?*

**FK:** Yup. My heart started beating real fast. I got all nervous. I didn't want to mess up or trip walking up the stairs.

**DP:** *What number will you be?*

**FK:** As of now, 4.

**DP:** *Not 44, like you wore in college?*

**FK:** No. A guy on the team [forward Jeff Taylor] already has that number.

**DP:** *You could buy it.*

**FK:** I could, but I'm cheap.



FRANK KAMINSKY

## GREEN HORNET

Charlotte turned down a trade offer that reportedly included six draft picks to select the 22-year-old Wisconsin center and national player of the year.

**DP:** *What are you going to treat yourself to with your contract?*

**FK:** Probably a nice dinner.

**DP:** *You're really splurging.*

**FK:** I might buy a \$50 steak.

**DP:** *What kind of car do you drive?*

**FK:** I don't have a car.

**DP:** *Are you going to get one?*

**FK:** Eventually.

**DP:** *Used or new?*

**FK:** New. I've been doing some research.

**DP:** *How about a Mini Cooper?*

**FK:** I was actually thinking a minivan so I could drive all my friends around.

Especially the one where you can reverse the seats and the people in the back can look at each other.

**DP:** *What's the first question you'll ask Jordan?*

**FK:** What's going on?

**DP:** *That's it?*

**FK:** I honestly don't know.

**DP:** *How about, Why did you take me?*

**FK:** That could be a good conversation starter. Or I could say, "How much does a polar bear weigh?" To which I'll answer, "Enough to break the ice."

**DP:** *Can you beat Michael Jordan one-on-one?*

**FK:** I am not going to answer that question.

**DP:** *You're 22. You have to be able to beat him.*

**FK:** I hope so, but he is the greatest basketball player of all time. I'm sure he's still got more than enough game left.

**DP:** *I'd take you over Jordan any day.*

**FK:** Now, or back in the day? If it's back in the day, that's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. □

## GUEST SHOTS SAY WHAT?



Lakers general manager  
**Mitch**

**Kupchak** said that changes in the game had an effect on his decision to take Ohio State guard D'Angelo Russell with the No. 2 pick. "There was a time when everybody was just trying to dunk the ball," he told me. "But with that three-point line, you have guys coming in who just have a gift." ...



Duke coach  
**Mike Krzyzewski**

explained why he passed on Stephen Curry coming out of high school. "So much of it was his size," Coach K said. "Who knew? [Davidson coach Bob] McKillop knew. I wish I knew." ...

ESPN analyst **Jay**



**Bilas** is well aware that some people

drink when he uses clichés. "We have an incredibly long draft, so the word *wingspan* [will] come out," he told me. "The Jay Bilas Drinking Game could be good for business at the Betty Ford Center."



*New Axe White Label*  
**BODY WASH**

---



**FOR A FRESH, INVIGORATING CLEAN**

---

The Case for . . .

# Albert Pujols, All-Star

BY BEN REITER

**WHAT DO** Everth Cabrera, Bryan LaHair and Gaby Sanchez have in common? Each of those middling hitters, none of whom are currently employed by a major league team, has been among the 116 who have participated in at least one of the last four All-Star Games. Meanwhile, Albert Pujols, the greatest offensive player of his generation, has not.

It used to be that the idea of a Midsummer Classic without Pujols was virtually unimaginable. The former Cardinals and current Angels slugger made the game nine times in his first 10 seasons, but his last appearance came in 2010, when he was 30. Pujols continued to put up what looked like All-Star-caliber statistics, but he was a victim of both heightened competition among first basemen and roster contortions by the game's managers. "I think over the four years I missed, my numbers were decent enough to be an All-Star," he says, "but I don't get to choose that."

Pujols seems to have suffered by comparison with his younger, singular self as much as with his contemporaries, although the loss of his traditional base of fan voting support after he left the Cardinals for a 10-year, \$240 million contract with the Angels before the 2012 season undoubtedly contributed. He was a particularly notable snub in '11 when, despite missing time with



a fractured left wrist, he entered the break with a .280 average, 18 homers and 50 RBIs, and in '14, when he was batting .279 with 20 and 64. Those numbers, however, looked modest next to the .324/23/68 line he averaged in his first 10 first halves.

The banality of Pujols's greatness seems to be hindering his All-Star candidacy again this season, at least among fans. According to the most recent update, which the league released on Monday, Pujols ranks a distant fifth in the voting for AL first basemen, behind the Tigers' Miguel Cabrera, the Royals' Eric Hosmer, the Rangers' Prince Fielder and, somehow, the Blue Jays' Justin Smoak. Failing election by the fans in the voting, which closes at midnight on Thursday, Pujols

could still make it to Cincinnati for the July 14 game through a player's ballot, as a manager's pick or through the fans' Final Vote, which will be announced July 12. However he gets there, this is the season in which his All-Star drought must end.

For the majority of his Angels tenure Pujols has been delivering two thirds of his former production with just one half of his body. First he sustained an injury to his right knee in 2012, which he had to have surgically cleaned up after that season and which remained painful through last fall. Then he tore the plantar fascia in his left foot, which ultimately ended his 2013 season after 99 games. "This game is hard already, even when you're 100%," he says. "Imagine how hard it is when you're injured."

This year, though, his lower body is healthy once more, and he has produced like the Pujols of old. In a 24-game stretch between May 28 and June 22 he batted .352 with 15 home runs, 30 RBIs and a 1.328 OPS. For the season, through Sunday, he was leading the AL with 23 home runs while batting .265 with 47 RBIs and an .887 OPS. His healed legs have allowed him to drive the ball again. His home-run-to-fly-ball rate of 17.8% is second best of his career high.

Pujols can't hide his desire to appear in the All-Star Game. "I miss those times," he says. "I miss being around young players. I miss being around so many superstars in one room."

"Did I ever think I was going to take four years off like that, that it wasn't going to happen?" he adds later. "I mean, I never thought that. But it's been four years. Hopefully I get the chance this year." □

5  
Years since  
Pujols last  
made an  
All-Star team.

9  
All-Star  
appearances  
for Pujols, tied  
for third most  
among active  
players.

23  
Home runs  
for Pujols,  
the most in  
the American  
League.



**V O L V O**



**OUR IDEA OF LUXURY**

THE ALL-NEW XC90



# FAMILY AFFAIR

Offensive lineman **Geoff Schwartz** gets creative in the kitchen—and the backyard.

**AT 6' 6" AND 340 POUNDS**, New York Giants lineman Geoff Schwartz towers over your typical backyard grill master. Schwartz may adhere to specific techniques when he is in pads and a helmet, but with a set of tongs in hand, it's all about improvising. "I'm not creative in any other part of my life besides cooking," Schwartz says with a laugh. "I can't draw at all, I'm not artistic, but my way to be artistic and creative is cooking."

Schwartz is lounging on the couch in his home in New Jersey, not far from his workplace, MetLife Stadium. His wife, Meredith, stands in the kitchen as their 11-month-old son Alex scoots around on the floor, babbling happily.

Schwartz's off-season diet is all protein, no carbs or sugar allowed.



"Cooking is a family thing for me," Schwartz says. "When we cook now, my son hangs out with us in the kitchen, and the kitchen becomes the focal point of the house. It's what I love about cooking, that it brings everyone together."

Schwartz grew up in Los Angeles with his parents and younger brother Mitchell, also an NFL lineman, and also a mountain of a man at 6' 5" and 320 pounds. To feed these two budding football stars, Schwartz's parents stocked an industrial-sized freezer with a six-month supply of meat, fish and poultry.

"At the height [of adolescence]," Schwartz says, "when my brother and I were both in high school, we would finish the six months' worth of meat in two months. If it's a family meal, my mom is going to make 16 pieces of chicken, three pounds of flank steak... We can eat a lot."

Schwartz made his first foray into grilling while attending the University of Oregon, but it didn't truly become a passion until he visited a friend at nearby Humboldt State. In the professional ranks, his playing career has taken him to Charlotte and Kansas City—the perfect proving grounds for honing his barbecue skills. Between twice-weekly visits to his favorite barbecue joint in KC and the availability of Kansas-style dry and wet rubs online, Schwartz has turned himself into a rib master on his ceramic charcoal grill.

"When my brother comes to town," Schwartz says, "we always have cook-offs because he thinks he's a better cook than me. We made ribs one time, and I was like, 'Mitch, I've been doing ribs for years now, mine are going to be better.' He's like, 'Noooo!' But he lost that one."

For Fourth of July, Schwartz plans on pulling out a new creation: a barbecue bacon cheeseburger with fried onions. His favorite meal, however, requires a little preplanning. He favors a bone-in ribeye marinated in Worcestershire sauce and steak seasoning, topped with homemade rosemary goat cheese compound butter. "The best part about cooking is that I get to experiment," Schwartz says.

But he admits that not every experiment is a success. "My brother and I once finished a jar of pickles, and then put minicucumbers into the juice to try and make our own pickles," he recalls, laughing. "They didn't pickle at all!"

—Evan Scott Schwartz

ANDREW KIST





*IGNITE YOUR TASTE BUDS WITH*  
**JALAPEÑO & CHEDDAR**



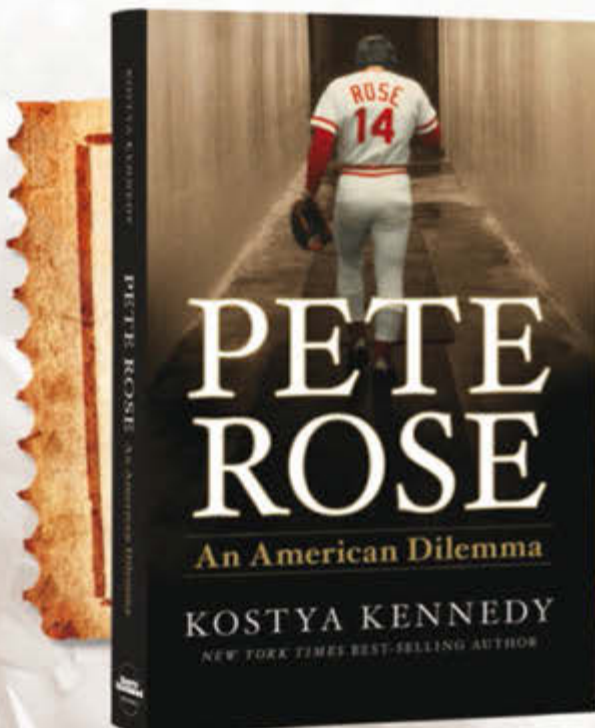
**40% Less Fat. 100% Flavor.**

40% less fat compared to regular potato chips. Regular potato chips contain 10g fat per 1 oz. serving. This product contains 5g fat per 1 oz. serving. All trademarks are owned by Frito-Lay North America, Inc. ©2015



# AMERICAN ORIGINALS

THE VERY DIFFERENT LIVES OF TWO MEN WHO, THROUGH THEIR  
PASSION AND GREATNESS, THEIR POWER AND THEIR FLAWS,  
HAVE HELPED DEFINE OUR NATIONAL PASTIME.



## PRAISE FOR PETE ROSE

"This is a wonderful, clearly written book about a dark and complicated tragedy that continues to beset the purity of our national pastime. The whole story is here: the deeply talented, passionate ball player, 'Charlie Hustle,' and the deeply morally challenged hustler who bestrides essential questions about our national game."

– Ken Burns

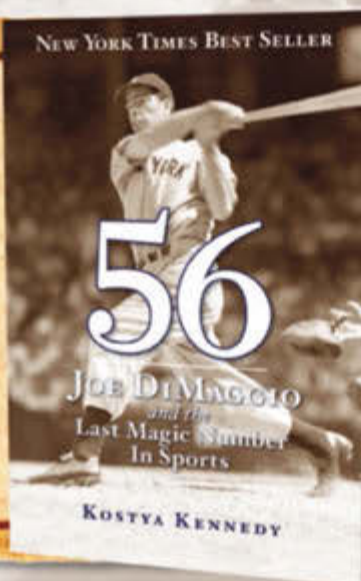
## PRAISE FOR 56

"Kennedy combines the sweep of a historian, the narrative power of a novelist and the passion of a fan."

– *Newsday*

"The era, the ballplayer and the record are all laid out beautifully.... The tension of the times is matched by the pressure of the streak."

– *San Francisco Chronicle*



NOW AVAILABLE IN PRINT AND E-EDITIONS WHEREVER BOOKS ARE SOLD

**Sports  
Illustrated**

[www.KostyaKennedy.com](http://www.KostyaKennedy.com)



2015  
Summer  
Double Issue

# WANT

*They were promoters (Don King) and pariahs (Jose Canseco), record breakers (Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) and underachievers (Drew Henson). But **Where Are They Now?** To catch up with this year's crop of former headliners, SI ranged from Hollywood to small-town Oklahoma to the Bahamas and beyond*



FROM LEFT: WALTER IOOSES JR. FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED; NEIL LEIFER FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED; SCOTT HALLERAN/GETTY IMAGES; RON VESELY/MLB PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES; UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA/COLLEGIATE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; BERND MULLER/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES; NEIL LEIFER FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED







# Brett Favre

*It took several attempts at retirement before the NFL's ultimate iron man wrapped his mind around life without football—and let's just say he's taken to it quite well. As he prepares to enter the Packers' Hall of Fame, Number 4 is finally ready for another Lambeau moment*

**BY GREG BISHOP**

Photograph by  
Mark Tucker  
For Sports Illustrated

## WHAT'S UP, DOCK?

The dog days of retirement find Favre far from the NFL, padding around his Mississippi estate and dipping his toes, occasionally, in the sports world—albeit amongst amateurs.

# B

**RETT FAVRE** grabs a random football from his memorabilia room and climbs inside a Silverado pickup with mud stains on the floorboards, dog-paw-shaped garage door openers clipped to the visor and a .22 rifle nestled under the backseat. “For varmint, mostly,” he says.

Hazards abound on Favre’s 465-acre estate in Sumrall, Miss. Rattlesnakes with poisonous fangs. Ravenous wild hogs with snouts that dig craters. Floods from heavy rains. Even the rare tornado, like the one in 2003 that ripped the barn roof off above Favre’s head, threw a trailer into a lake and uprooted some 180 pine trees.

The pickup banks right, into the woods, away from the mansion, the pool, the guest house and the sand volleyball court, past two unnamed lakes, each with its own fountain. Favre doesn’t give visitors an address. He sends coordinates to the property, which resides at the intersection of nature park and retirement hideaway. “Watch out for ants,” Favre says, as he parks. “They’ll eat you alive.”

It’s 9:35 a.m. on a Tuesday in March, more than four years into Favre’s retirement. Not the first retirement, or the second (loosely speaking), or even the third, but the fourth—the one that seems to have stuck. Fortified by gluten-free biscuits he made that morning, Favre grabs the football and swats at mosquitoes and loosens his right arm.

His dog, an 11-year-old chocolate lab named Sam, follows, wet from a morning swim. She had a tumor removed the week before and requires daily insulin shots; she can no longer gobble pancakes or bacon the way she once did. Her

whiskers, like Favre's hair, have turned gray. She's old, and that only reminds Favre that he is getting older, ensconced in middle age now: 45, or roughly halfway between the end of his career and an AARP membership. Teammates once called him Grandpa. Now, he is one—a grandfather to two boys, Parker and AJ.

Over 20 NFL seasons, sometimes it seemed as if Favre would never grow up, let alone grow old. He thrilled and scrambled and improvised and, before one important drive, paused to goofily advise coach Mike Holmgren of an icicle in his mustache. Favre never took himself too seriously. He lined teammates' helmets with Vaseline and baby powder, laced jockstraps with Icy Hot cream, dumped buckets of water on unsuspecting heads. He read aloud from *You Might Be a Redneck If...* on the way to playoff games. He was the opposite of fine wine: He never aged. Until he did.

Favre grabs the football—“slightly deflated,” he jokes; “we better not go there”—and slings passes that whistle through the woods. The three MVP awards, the two Super Bowl appearances, the trove of records broken, the past life—it all floods back. This is Favre's reunion season, anyway. Time to remember what's important, and to forget how it all ended in Green Bay. On July 18, the prodigal quarterback will have his number 4 retired and be inducted into the Packers' Hall of Fame. He will return to Lambeau Field for the first time since 2010, when, in his second season with the Vikings, he fell to his former team while his former fans showered him with boos.

“I think I could play,” Favre says later, out by the pool. “As far as throwing, of course. I could make all the throws I made before.”

He pauses, because he knows it's one thing for any retired QB to make such statements and quite another for them to come from Brett Lorenzo Favre. “We're not trying to start some he's-coming-out-of-retirement deal,” he says. Brief pause.

“But I could play.”

**O**N DEC. 20, 2010, in Week 15 of an already lost season, Favre's 5–8 Vikings hosted the Bears at TCF Bank Stadium, their temporary home after snow collapsed part of the Metrodome's roof. “I shouldn't have been playing,” Favre says. “I had a hurt collarbone. Typical me: Nothing to gain, but I wanted to play.”

He dropped back on third down in the second quarter. He never saw defensive end Corey Wootton close in and bury him from behind, never felt his head bounce off the frozen turf. “Next thing you know,” Favre says, “I'm snoring.”

He spotted trainer Eric Sugarman, who told him, “Come with me.”

*“I could make all the throws I made before,” Favre says now, weighing his game. “We're not trying to start some he's-coming-out-of-retirement deal. But I could play.”*



#### BACK DRAFT

Jort-clad and wide-eyed, or stubble-faced and steely-eyed, Favre has always had a strong grip on the game.

“Why are the Bears here?” Favre asked. He took two steps toward Chicago's sideline.

Sugarman escorted Favre into the locker room, where the QB showered, drank hot chocolate and ate a hot dog. That was both his last play and, he says, the exact moment that he knew he would retire. Not *should*. Would. “From that point on, I never missed it,” Favre says. “I knew it was time.”

The end.

Believe that at your own risk, history suggested. Favre turned retiring—and unretiring and retiring again—into an art form, an annual (and annoying) reality show broadcast live every off-season. To his copious records he would add a strange first: first quarterback in NFL history to lead three different teams (Packers, Jets, Vikings) to winning records in three straight seasons *and* retire after each of those seasons *and* come back after each of those retirements. Break *that* record, Peyton Manning.

The signs were there, in hindsight. The euphoria after wins had vanished. In that 20th season, his last,

Favre sometimes considered staying down when defenders flattened him. In December, against the Bills, he landed chest-first after one vicious blow and thought, *That one's going to stay with me*. He had never thought that way before.

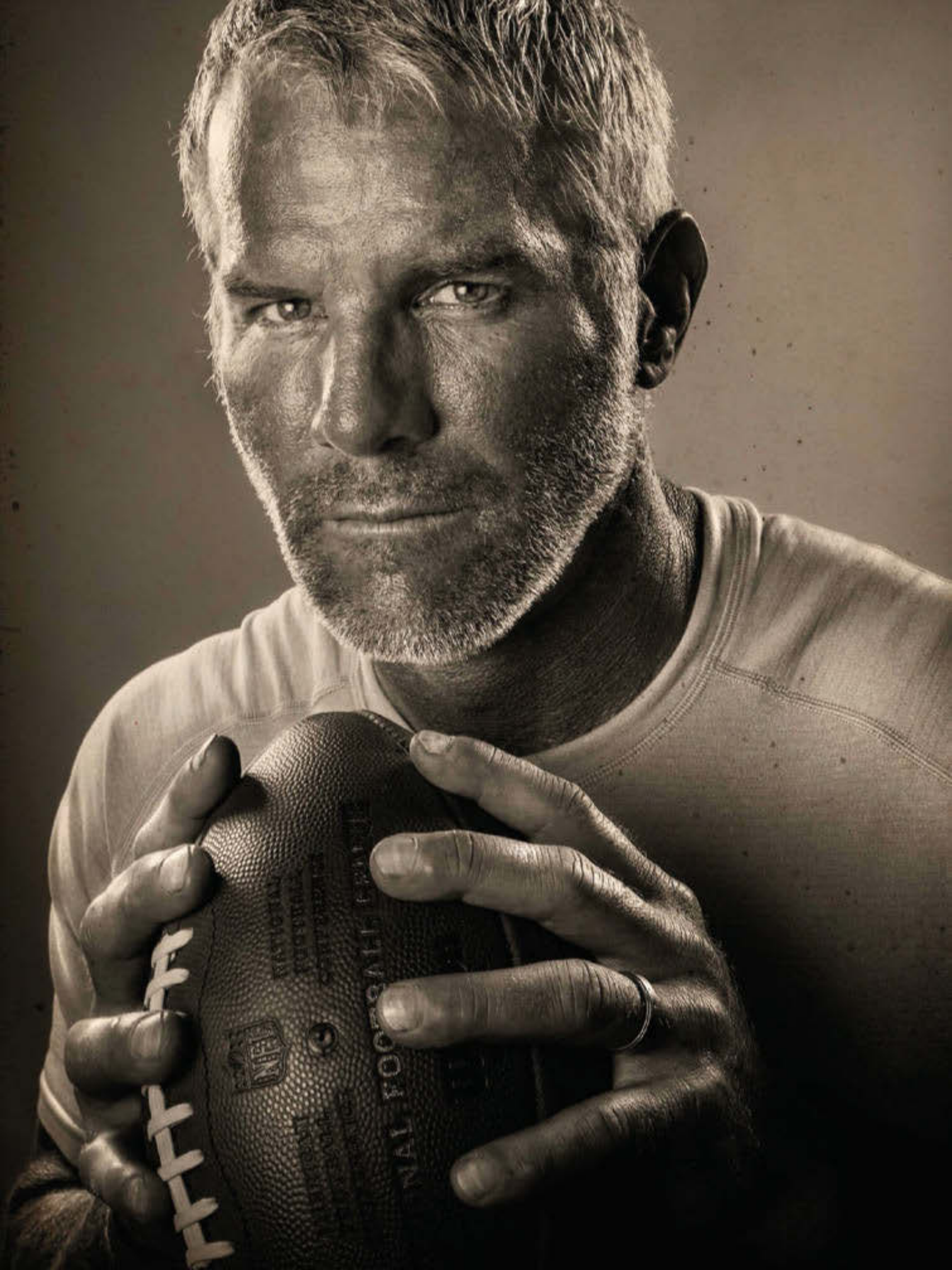
His former coach and friend, Steve Mariucci, asked Favre all the time, “Why do you keep playing? What do you have left to prove?”

“Because I can still play,” Favre always responded.

Still, Mariucci urged him to retire. “The only thing you have left to prove is that you can let go,” he said.

It wasn't just the hits that were getting to Favre. It was the Packers' decision to wave goodbye after the 2007 season, which still gnawed at him three years later. The repeated summers of contemplation and anxiety. The repeated relocations for his family. The Favre Watches and the jokes. The on-field frustrations, like the torn right biceps that sank an 8–3 start with the Jets in '08, or the fourth-quarter interception that





cost the Vikings a Super Bowl appearance in '09. The off-field distractions: an '08 NFL investigation into whether Favre had sent inappropriate text messages to a game-day hostess for the Jets, and the lawsuit filed by two Jets massage therapists who made the same claim. (The investigation was inconclusive, and the lawsuit was settled in '13.)

The signs pointed toward a most un-Favre-like conclusion: The quarterback who seemed he might play forever had begun to wear thin. And, after more than 300 NFL starts, there was concern about his future. "No one's invincible," Favre says. "Things do catch up with you. There is a price to be paid. What that will be is yet to be seen. It may be from one violent hit. I don't know, but it's scary. Because you wonder, you can't help but wonder, what is that going to do to me? Or am I going to be one of the lucky ones? Whatever lucky is. I'm not knocking the NFL. I knew what I signed up for. I could have got out whenever I wanted to get out."

All that, Favre says, seems like a million years ago—another guy in another life. He has seen that guy, on television. "I don't study my retirements," he says. "But I have watched them. I look at them the way I do old pictures. Like, Oh my gosh. That haircut."

On the first Sunday of the 2011 season, his first out of the league in 21 years, Favre cut grass and cleared brush at his property. His wife, Deanna, called him inside. The Vikings game was on. Favre had figured he would miss football, but he did not. He watched the game and went back outside and woke up Monday morning free from soreness.

At the end of last season he watched Manning's descent into Favrelandia. An injury. A playoff loss, quickly followed by all the retirement questions. Favre always hated to address his future in the moments after a season ended. He loathed football in those moments. "Better him than me," he thought.

**F**AVRE ARRIVES at his local grocery store with a shopping list: paper towels, syrup, pancake mix and chips for his youngest daughter, 15-year-old Breleigh. At the checkout line, the clerk asks, "Are you someone famous?"

"I don't know," Favre says.

"Well," the clerk says, "you look like someone famous."

"Would someone famous shop in here?"

The clerk steals a glance at the bagger. "You're right," she says. "Nobody famous would be in here."

"Justin Bieber wouldn't shop here," the bagger chimes in.

Favre laughs. He relishes any moments of anonymity. Sometimes someone will recognize him only from his cameo in *There's Something About Mary*. "You're Brett Favv-ruh," they'll say, a nod to how Ben Stiller's character mispronounced his last name. "I can't tell you how much I appreciate that," he'll respond.

Favre did not make any master plan for life after football. He approached retirement the same way he approached the game itself: He winged it. As he fiddled around each morning, he listened to books on tape, mostly self-help volumes about how to better parent or how to clean his showerhead or how to fix a cabinet. He coordinated the offense for a high school football team over two seasons. He turned down offers from at least 10 reality television shows and *Dancing with the Stars*. He played sand volleyball, poorly. He cooked breakfast, experimenting with different recipes after discovering dairy, gluten and soy allergies. "Sucks getting old," Favre says.

### MAN ON THE MOVE

A Packer at heart, retirement No. 1 nonetheless took Favre away to New York, and No. 2 to (gasp!) Minnesota. His record against Green Bay: 2-2.



He followed Deanna (who defeated breast cancer in 2005) around the country as she climbed mountains and competed in half Ironman races and triathlons. He visited national parks—Glacier and Yellowstone. He skied in Colorado, Montana and Utah. He made more than 30 trips to Disney World, still the boy who never quite grew up.

Favre stills films the occasional commercial, for Wrangler jeans, Copper Fit or Foot Locker. He acts as a spokesman for Sqor Sports, a social media company. But mostly, he says, "I just want to hide on my property and not do anything."

Away from the male-dominated world of professional football, Favre is surrounded by women now. Deanna, 46, and Breleigh live with him. His mother-in-law, Ann Byrd, lives on the property. His elder daughter, 26-year-old Brittany Favre-Mallion, graduated in May from Loyola Law, in New Orleans. Even Sam, the lab, is female. "Deanna is in charge of everything, best I can tell," says John Karnes, Favre's friend and property manager.

Favre does enjoy more stereotypically manly pursuits. When his wife and daughters finish *American Idol* and *The Voice*, he stays awake for *Mountain Men* and *Ax Men* and *Swamp People* and *Ice Cold Gold*, of which he gushes, "They're over there in Greenland! Badass! And *Gold Rush*. I love *Gold Rush*!"





He still hunts. “About like he breathes,” says J.D. Simpson, another Favre friend and his pastor. Deer in the fall. Wild turkeys in the spring. Trips to the Delta, Montana, New Mexico and Kansas, where he bagged a nine-point buck last football season. “He’s not a hermit,” Karnes says.

In fact, most days Favre the Fundraiser solicits donations. He helped raise \$2 million for a new football complex at Oak Grove High, where he coached, in nearby Hattiesburg, after a tornado ripped apart the old one. Then he turned his attention toward a new volleyball complex, for which he has reached about \$800,000 of his \$1.1 million goal.

One beneficiary of that complex will be Breleigh, a volleyball star at Oak Grove, where she’ll be a junior in the fall. Favre travels throughout the Southeast for her tournaments and drives her to practices for her select team in Daphne, Ala., two hours away. He describes himself as a quiet spectator in the stands, but it’s a struggle balancing his own drive with the restraint required of a parent.

Favre’s father, Irvin, rarely doled out compliments in his decades as a coach, and Favre guards against his natural instinct to instruct Breleigh the way Big Irv did him. He wants her to practice longer, with more intensity. She sometimes rolls her eyes at him. He wants to

provide constructive criticism. It doesn’t always come across that way.

Favre leaves reminders to himself on his cellphone. *Be sure to encourage. Be positive with your kids.* But sometimes he can’t help himself. “If you say you’re going to work on your jump serve, let’s work on it,” he’ll say.

Another eye roll.

“You’d think [Deanna and I] were never competitive in anything,” Favre says.

**F**AVRE PULLS his truck back into the driveway and rolls down the window to speak with his adolescent nephew Casey. They make plans to play catch later, and Favre admits that their last session resulted in a sore elbow. “Getting old, son.”

“Uncle Brett has joint problems,” Casey deadpans.

Favre nods. He started 321 consecutive NFL games, including playoffs, the record of all records, and he suspects that all the hits and throws and practices—combined with the four years he started in college and a car crash that left his insides wrecked before his senior season—will eventually exact their toll. “I didn’t do myself any favors, the way I played,” he says.

He suffered his worst concussion on the last play of his career. Another one

*“No one’s invincible,” Favre says of the punishment he took in his long career. “There is a price to be paid. What that will be is yet to be seen.”*



earlier that season, in New England, left him seeing fireworks and needing 10 stitches to close a chin gash. Dings? Dizziness? Bell rung? “Duh,” Favre says, sounding older than ever. Over 20 seasons, he lost count.

Favre does not resent the game that left him battered, sore, racked with pain on Monday mornings. Over his career the average size of NFL players at every position ballooned. He came to expect bigger hits—and he took them. He watched former teammates, like backup quarterback Jim McMahon, descend into memory loss, and worse. And yet, while Favre sometimes forgets where he’s left his car keys or his sunglasses, he is almost pain free, save for that joint soreness.

He wonders about the years ahead. No quarterback played more games than Favre, or suffered more blows. He had surgery on both ankles, his right elbow, his right shoulder and his right biceps, twice. His cumulative hits number in the thousands. That worries him. “It’s scary,” he says. “I mean, nothing shocks me anymore. I never thought I’d see Jim McMahon like that. He was invincible.”

Favre can still heave a football 50 yards, about 30 fewer than at his peak. In his first year away from the game he gained 25 pounds, stuffing himself with

chocolate lava cakes, brownies and ice cream. He weighed 248 the day in 2011 he decided to enter a 5K run. He lasted all of 70 yards and finished the race, walking, in a Gilbert Brown–esque 48 minutes. But he kept at the jogging until he could plod four miles around his property, and he took up cycling and started to pay attention to his diet. When his family traveled, he took early-morning runs around Seattle and Park City and New Orleans. One morning in the French Quarter, he passed a drunk on Bourbon Street. “You’re Brett Favre!” the man shouted.

Those pursuits replaced football, and Favre insists that when he let go, he let go almost completely. He says he doesn’t own a jersey, he doesn’t watch many games. What memorabilia he has is confined to one small room.

Favre doesn’t want to serve as some sort of elder statesman. He doesn’t want to opine on Tom Brady and Deflategate, although he doesn’t think flattened balls helped Brady much (even while he says he never directly communicated with his own equipment managers the way Brady did).

Another nephew, Max, does play football. Favre has no issues with that choice. He wants better treatment for concussions, more research. But change football? “I wouldn’t,” he says. “Other than the tackling. It’s terrible.”

**F**AVRE PARKS his truck in front of the South Mouth Deli in early June for breakfast. “It was either here or Cracker Barrel,” he says before ordering gluten-free French toast, fruit and a Coke.

That the Packers will retire Favre’s number 4 jersey and induct him into Green Bay’s Hall of Fame dominates the conversation. He’s excited about the ceremony and moved by the fans’ interest, especially by how Lambeau Field’s lower bowl sold out—67,000 seats—so that diehards could watch Favre’s induction on the big screen. The ceremony itself will take place in a nearby atrium.

“I was blown away,” Favre says. “I mean, it’s not Elvis, but it feels that way. Like Elvis is coming back for one last show.”

Favre grew up in Green Bay. Or tried to. He jumped on the backs of so many teammates after touchdowns that Holmgren threatened to fine him \$5,000 for his next leap. He babysat Mariucci’s children, but “after a while, they didn’t want that anymore,” Mariucci says. “He kept giving them the Dutch oven.”

A scout named Ted Thompson joined the Packers in 1992, the same year Favre was acquired in a trade with the Falcons. Sometimes the two retired to the Fifty Yard Line, across the street from Lambeau, and downed a pint or three. Back then, Thompson says, the Packers struggled not only to win but also against the notion that players didn’t want to come to Green Bay.

Favre changed that. Thompson recalls the afternoon Favre replaced an injured Don Majkowski against the Bengals on Sept. 20, 1992, and threw a last-second touchdown for a comeback win. *Oh, boy*, Thompson thought. *This must be it.*

Over beers at the NFL combine, counterparts would warn Holmgren that Favre was going to get him fired. But Holmgren and Favre worked in an odd-couple sense. Favre even listened. Sometimes.

After three consecutive 9–7 seasons, with a 2–2 record in the postseason, Favre approached Holmgren on the team plane after a playoff loss. “I finally get it,” he said. And he was right. He won those MVP awards and a Super Bowl in 1997 and an NFC championship a year later. On the field after their Super Bowl triumph, Holmgren told Favre that he loved him. The coach, nonetheless, left for Seattle in ’99. “I can’t help but think that if Mike had stayed, they would have won another Super Bowl or two,” Mariucci says.

Favre never expected to leave. He never wanted to. “I remember when that whole Joe Montana deal unfolded,” he says, recalling the Hall of Famer’s unceremonious departure from San Francisco. “When he went to the Chiefs, I’m like, You’ve gotta be kidding me. If it can happen to Montana, it can happen to anyone.”

## FAVRE FLUNG

Peyton Manning may be moving in on number 4’s NFL-record 186 wins, but Favre’s ironman standard of 321 straight starts looks safe: Eli Manning is the closest active player, with 178.



Giants cornerback Corey Webster intercepted Favre’s last pass as a Packer, in overtime of the 2008 NFC title game. That’s when the melodrama started. Favre says that he felt pressure from Green Bay to make an immediate decision on whether he wanted to retire. He believes that Thompson, by then the general manager, wanted to hand the reins to Aaron Rodgers, Favre’s backup then (and now arguably the best player in football). Favre retired for the first time. Four months later he unretired. “Had I [taken my time deciding], I would have come back and played,” Favre says. “The drama would have been avoided.”

The Packers refused to grant his release. Instead, they traded Favre to the Jets. After one season in New York he retired and unretired, landing next with the Packers’ NFC North rivals, the Vikings, in 2009. Still angry, Favre beat his former team twice that season. The crowd at Lambeau showered him with boos and death threats as Favre, wearing purple, threw four touchdowns in his Lambeau return. After both wins, Favre received text messages from an unlikely source. “Great job,” one read. “You played outstanding,” said another.

The texts came from Thompson, and to Favre they represented the first step toward reconciliation. “That was positive,” Favre says, “whereas, when I left, I felt like they did this media bash







*“Had I taken my time deciding, I would have come back and played,” Favre says of being rushed into a short-lived retirement by the Packers in 2008. “The drama would have been avoided.”*

to make their decision look right and mine look wrong.”

Favre had always identified as a Packer. He hoped the fans felt the same way. “He needed peace,” Simpson says. “It hurt him how the process went.”

In particular, Favre believes his relationship with Rodgers has been mischaracterized. “We got along fine,” he says, “regardless of what you’ve heard.”

“Look,” he continues, “when I was on the sideline as a backup, I would be like, *I kind of hope [the starter] gets hurt. But not bad.* I just wanted to get in. I couldn’t believe I was pulling for somebody to get hurt. Then, when I used to lay on the ground, it crossed my mind that those guys behind me feel the same way.”

Favre wants the public to believe that all the tension and hard feelings have smoothed out over time. Maybe that’s true, or maybe he just doesn’t want to talk about it. Now, he wants to

focus on the Hall induction, and a second Lambeau ceremony scheduled for November, and not the Packers’ refusal to let him host his charity flag football game at the stadium.

As for the ceremony, “I expect him to cry a lot,” Karnes says. “He’s pretty big on crying on national TV.”

**F**AVRE RECEIVED an unexpected request this spring. It came from Nevil Barr, the longtime football coach at Oak Grove, who wanted to ask Favre about . . . *retirement*. “You sure you want to ask me about that?” Favre joked. “I could write a book about that. How to—and how *not* to.”

Favre told him the same thing he tells anyone who asks, including former teammates like Donald Driver: If you wonder what might happen if you keep going, then don’t retire. As bad as that final Vikings’ campaign was—11 touchdowns, 19 interceptions—it answered a question that otherwise would have lingered: Could that team win a Super Bowl? (No, it turns out.) Favre may not have liked what he learned, but he answered every question, and that, he says, is what enabled him to finally let go.

“He’s the poster child for what every athlete feels,” says Ken Ruetters, another former Packers teammate who now runs a program that helps athletes transition into retirement. “For that inner turmoil. For the desire to still play.”

As the ceremony approaches, Favre pulls on a Packers jersey for a SPORTS ILLUSTRATED photo shoot—the first time, he says, that he’s worn the dark green number 4 since that title game in 2008. A photographer snaps away, Favre with a football in his hands and Sam resting at his feet. He has already

started writing the speech, waking up at 2 a.m. to jot down notes on his iPad. “I don’t want to leave anything out,” he says. “But I don’t want to ramble. I don’t want, *He’s already said that. My gosh, he must have a brain injury or something.*”

Favre calls himself the world’s best Rambler. He’ll start a story about his daughter’s volleyball practice, pivot to the time that he asked pro volleyballer Kerri Walsh Jennings to call Breleigh, and wind through the time he tried (and failed) to get Breleigh back-

stage at a Maroon 5 concert—and finally he’ll get to the point, which is that Breleigh may play volleyball in college. But not without an interlude about his bicycle crash one week earlier, the story behind the scabs that cover his left elbow, knee and shoulder. That and how the geese nearby are Canadian.

“I never followed a script,” Favre says, and that applies to his career and his life and his retirement. Which is exactly how he left Green Bay and wound back to return this summer as a Packer among the greatest Packers, alongside Vince Lombardi and Bart Starr, Holmgren and Reggie White.

“That’s how he should be remembered,” Holmgren says. “As a Packer.”

One day after the photo shoot, Favre stops by Oak Grove High for a workout with a college quarterback he mentors, but rain washes out the session. He is asked if he felt even a hint of nostalgia when he pulled on that Packers jersey a day earlier. “It was so big on me,” Favre says. “It felt like a nightgown.”

“That’s not my world anymore,” he adds.

Favre climbs in his truck and points back toward his estate, where the previous afternoon he managed to get two tractors stuck in mud surrounded by high brush, where the rattlesnakes lurk. He drives past the construction for the volleyball complex, away from the football field. This time, he will not turn back. □

# WWE Mania

*One thing is clear when old lords of the ring gather for a Hall of Fame induction: Like spandex, the memories—and the appeal—of pro wrestling's graying stars forever hold their shape*

**BY KOSTYA KENNEDY**

Photograph by  
**Craig Ambrosio/WWE**  
For Sports Illustrated

## **HULK: SMASH!**

A Hall inductee in 2005 (20 years after his SI cover), Hogan was on hand in San Jose this year to enshrine his late friend Randy Savage.



WALTER IOOSS JR. FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED

**T**

**HERE ARE** no guidelines for induction into the WWE Hall of Fame—no eligibility rules, no formal voting process. And although each year's incoming class is celebrated onstage in front of thousands of people, an eccentric red-carpet event that is always a much-anticipated highlight of WWE's WrestleMania weekend, no building houses the Hall. It is another facet of pro wrestling, like Hulk Hogan's hair and, yea, the matches themselves, that is not exactly real.

The first inductee, in 1993, was the verifiably peerless 7' 4", 520-pound Andre

Rousimoff—this Hall of Fame, in other words, was built on the shoulders of a Giant—and 22 years later, there is no surefire way to assess a candidate's chances of joining a madcap membership that now numbers more than 100 (from Abdullah the Butcher and Bobo Brazil to Yokozuna and Larry Zbyszko). But this much, at least, seems certain: If you are a wrestler of enormous heft, if your hair is bleached blond and your ring costume is a nod to '70s sex-club fetish wear, if your signature move involves lowering your terrifying rump (a pair of massive gelatinous haunches split by a slender thong) onto your helpless opponent's face, well, then you are a WWE Hall of Fame shoo-in.

"The Stinkface started one night down in Mobile, Alabama, in 2000," says 49-year-old Rikishi, né Solofa Fatu Jr. The 6' 1", 425-pound former Intercontinental champ began his wrestling career in 1985, and now he is speaking in







a corporate office at San Jose's SAP Center, a few hours before he will clamber onstage and officially join the Hall's class of 2015 along with the unbearable Bushwhackers, Arnold Schwarzenegger and the late and indisputably great Macho Man Randy Savage. In the backroom with Rikishi are his considerably more slender twin sons, Jimmy and Jey Uso (their wrestling names, dude), who are pursuing careers as a manic, face-painted tag team and who are very proud of their old man.

"So I'm working a match with Big Boss Man, the late Ray Traylor," Rikishi continues. "I clothesline him, and he's slumped in the corner against the turnbuckle when I hear this little old lady call out with her Southern accent, 'Hey, Rikishi! Turn around and put your ass in his face!' So I decided to do it! I started slapping my ass, and as I took my time walking toward Boss Man, there was an energy from the crowd like I had never felt. When I sat on his face, the whole place just popped!"

"The next evening, on *Monday Night Raw*, I officially debuted the Stinkface. I knew that when Vince McMahon—the then and present hands-on chairman of the federation—"saw the move, he would set everyone up to get one, and he did. Even him. That *Raw* show was the biggest night of my career."

*WWE Raw*, as the three-hour live program is now called, debuted in 1993, and WWE creatively (and at least somewhat accurately) categorizes it as "the longest-running weekly program in U.S. prime-time history." Longer than *Lassie*. More episodes than *The Simpsons*.

Although the show, along with the sport, has evolved over the years, moving away from hard-edged story lines toward more family-oriented productions (no blood, less cussing), *Raw* is, at its essence, the same show it was on Day One.

Rikishi's sublime ridiculousness, combined with his genuine physical presence, gets to the heart of wrestling's appeal, the things that endure, "Then. Now. Forever," as one WWE slogan has it. A good Stinkface, much like a figure-four leg lock or a smack with a folding chair, will never go out of style. The success of WWE today—and by some metrics it has never been stronger—stems directly from the 1980s, when WrestleMania debuted, when Hogan appeared in *Rocky III* and on the cover of *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED*, and when McMahon announced what everyone of even the most modest intellectual means already understood: The matches were scripted, the whole wrestling enterprise more a show than a sporting event.

McMahon's disclosure was made largely for business reasons, to help the federation (then known as the WWF) avoid paying fees to certain athletic commissions. But it also put into play pro wrestling's existential dilemma. "If you don't want to believe in kayfabe even a little, you can't be a wrestling fan," says Stu Saks, the longtime editor and publisher of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*, refer-



ring to the industry's term (derived, perhaps, from pig Latin) for made-up things being passed off as true. "The kayfabe era has taken a very long time to unravel because not everyone wants it to. You have to want the illusion. Of course you know it isn't real—how could it be?—but you suspend disbelief. We find ourselves straddling the line, thinking, *Well, maybe that one part of it is real. . . . Or is it?*"

"Growing up, I always wanted to believe in the story lines so I could be emotionally involved," says Big Show (given name: Paul Wight), who won this year's battle royal at WrestleMania. Show, who goes 7 feet, 450 pounds, came into pro wrestling in the mid-1990s and was initially billed as the son of Andre the Giant, a backstory he has long since shed. "There's a part of me that wants that magic. Just like watching *Breaking Bad* when Jesse goes off on a tangent and you're like, *What is with this guy?* You think about him

*Rikishi's sublime ridiculousness, combined with his physical presence, gets to the heart of wrestling's appeal. A good Stinkface, like a smack with a folding chair, will never go out of style.*

as a real person. In wrestling, you want to buy in enough that the soap opera has your attention."

The crazy uncle in so many sports fans' closets, wrestling taps into some of the same audience that follows more widely respected pastimes. And because it demands high athleticism (ever try backflipping off the top rope?), it draws its workforce from an overlapping talent pool: Scores of WWE performers wrestled or played football in college. Current contender Roman Reigns was an All-ACC defensive tackle before failing to catch on in the NFL. Superstar Brock Lesnar is a former UFC and NCAA wrestling champion. And yet, what WWE offers is not a sport as we know it; nor is it, to borrow Big Show's analogy, precisely a soap opera. In the end it may be most helpful to think of pro wrestling—in which overmuscled men in spandex routinely soar through the air and





exaggerated fiends such as the Undertaker lock victims into coffins—as a Marvel comic book that has burst from its colorful pages and come to life.

**WE MIGHT** not be quite the picture of economic utopia that its organizers would have you believe, especially given that miscalculations surrounding the valuation of its 16-month-old premium digital network helped drop the outfit's stock price by almost 50% since its fleeting high of \$30.94 in March 2014. But, in terms of fan engagement and reach, pro wrestling is riding a serious wave. WWE has nearly 500 million social media followers, including 350 million across its Facebook pages and 6.4 million subscribers to its YouTube channel; numbers that outpace every major U.S. sports league outside the NBA and that top any sports media outlet. The last four Manias produced four of the top nine attendance figures in wrestling history, including the 76,976 who turned out to see the 31st edition at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., in March. WrestleMania and its surrounding events—community outreach missions, merchandise bazaars, autograph signings and, of course, the Hall of Fame ceremony—bring in an estimated 125,000 fans from 40-odd countries and can add close to \$150 million to a local economy. For a city bidding to host, WrestleMania is a better investment, by a long shot, than the Super Bowl, on which Glendale, Ariz., lost money this year.

## VAST ACTION HEROES

One Giant (Andre, near left, at Wrestlemania I) begat another, Rikishi. Now, everyone is big time, including the high-flying Cena, at Mania 31.

the wrestler gets summoned by McMahon and *told* that he will raise it. Are the matches choreographed? Usually, and often meticulously. "It can be like a dance routine," says Reigns, "but no one would say we're doing ballet." Are the personalities contrived? Uh, have you seen the psychotic, inbred Bray Wyatt stalking toward the ring, oil lamp in hand, trailed by a phalanx of ghouls?

But does all that mean it's fake?

"Nine back surgeries, brother," says Hulk Hogan, lowering himself gingerly into a chair in the penthouse suite at the Fairmont San Francisco two days before WrestleMania 31. "Two knee surgeries, two hip surgeries. I had my leg broken. I had a piece of my finger bitten off. *Bitten off!* There is nothing fake about how you feel when you wake up in the morning."

At 61, Hogan, who still gets called upon to be involved in an occasional match, remains pro wrestling's Wayne Gretzky, its Tony Hawk. At WWE's annual business partner summit earlier this year, attending sponsors received a gift bag that included an action figure: Hogan, wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with HULKMANIA 1984. "And I was a guy who knew how to work," he says of those old injuries, "how to take care of myself. There were matches when I'd go all out for 30, 40 minutes. But lots of times we'd get the crowd up where it needed to be in less than 10 minutes. I'd signal to my opponent, and then *Wham!* My big boot, leg drop and we're out of there. You read the crowd. They guide you."

They sure do. Consider, on a relevant note, an essential moment in American theater, from the 1954 musical *Peter Pan*. Tinker Bell, poisoned, is dying, her fairy's light flickering out. Peter becomes distraught—and so, by proxy, does the audience. “Do you believe?” Peter shouts. (In fairies, he means.) “If you believe, clap your hands; don’t let Tink die.” Sure as the Neverland moon, the crowd begins to clap, with increasing intensity, until Tinkerbelle glows bright. She is indeed saved by the earnest audience members, most of whom, once the houselights go up, would concede that they do not believe in fairies at all.

In WWE, such audience influence drives story lines, as evidenced by Daniel Bryan. A B-plus character of modest success whose achievements had come mainly on a lower circuit, Bryan got elevated to world heavyweight champion following a series of improbable turns, including real-life injuries to other contenders. Bryan’s reign was supposed to be a stopgap, and McMahon instructed him to act like the most excited guy in the world to have won the belt, to be annoying, even, in his jubilation. So Bryan—undersized at 5' 10", 210 pounds; thoughtful and gentle-seeming; pale and lousy with facial hair—started leaping spasmodically around the ring before and after matches, shouting, “Yes! Yes! Yes!” while thrusting his arms in the air. He’d behave that gleefully even after winning a decision by disqualification. The crowds, though, did not find this annoying. They loved it. Bryan was embraced as an authentic

underdog and, overnight, audiences were themselves shouting “Yes! Yes! Yes!” and clamoring for him to win. T-shirts with YES! and Bryan’s face printed on them sold at arena concession stands.

“Daniel Bryan isn’t a guy you’d think we would put up to represent the company,” says Stephanie McMahon, Vince’s daughter and WWE’s chief brand officer, as well as a nefarious on screen character whose story-line marriage to Triple H evolved into their real-life marriage in 2003. “But the crowd wouldn’t let him go away. We have a focus group every night, in arenas”—WWE wrestlers typically work five shows a



## IRON MCMAHON

A regional wrestling promoter early on, McMahon (with Triple H) bought WWE from his father in 1982 and worked himself into the fantasy.

week, 52 weeks a year—“and on social media. They tell us what they want.”

Against all odds Bryan was given a slot in the main event at WrestleMania 30. There, he overcame not one but two opponents, then held his belt aloft through a downpour of confetti as a Superdome crowd of more than 75,000 roared. *Tinker Bell lives!* “Without the fans, I had no chance. None,” says Bryan. “I’m not a great athlete. I’m not dramatic. I have worked really hard in my wrestling career, but other guys have worked really hard too. I got lucky. The people held me up.”

**BRYAN APPEARED** onstage—greeted by a thunderous roar of Yes!—at the 2015 Hall of Fame ceremony as he honored a boy named Connor Michalek, a WWE superfan who died of cancer at eight. Connor, who idolized Bryan, was the recipient of the first Warrior Award, named for the Ultimate Warrior (né Jim Hellwig), a 1980s- and ’90s-era superstar who, three days after being inducted into the Hall in 2014, died of a heart attack at 54. The Warrior was on wrestlers’ minds that night, and his widow, Dana Warrior,



## Tito Santana

*A quick study in the ring, the former wrestling star now focuses on teaching at-risk kids the value of an education*

BY DAN GREENE

**WHEN HE WAS** growing up in Mission, Texas, Merced Solis’s school year didn’t

last long. From first through eighth grade he would attend only from October through April, at which point he and his three older siblings would pack into the canvas-covered flatbed of his father’s truck and head north for six months to pick asparagus in Illinois, strawberries in Wisconsin and tomatoes in Indiana. He longed to escape migrant work. “I knew education was the way out,” says Solis, now 62. “I used to think to myself, One



way or another, I have to go to college.”

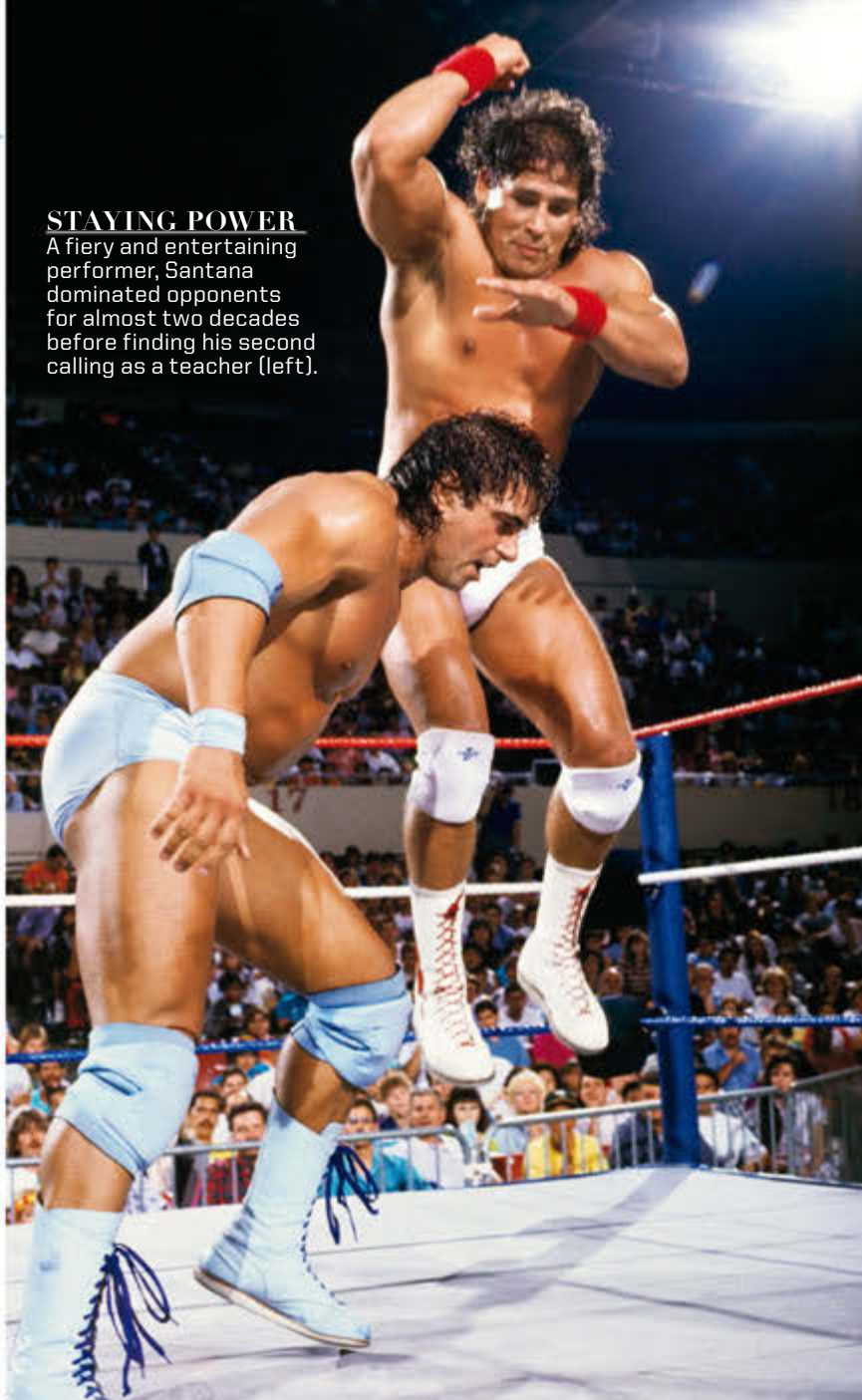
When he was in ninth grade, Solis and his 16-year-old brother, Roberto, stayed in Mission to complete the school year. That fall, a teacher named Mr. Sanchez suggested Merced take up football—a conversation that would propel him not only to college but also to steel-cage matches, sold-out arenas and national stardom under the nom de guerre Tito Santana.

Solis received a full scholarship to play tight end at West Texas State (now West Texas A&M). There he got a degree in physical education and befriended the quarterback, fellow future WWE Hall of Famer Tully Blanchard, whose father ran a pro wrestling promotion in San Antonio. When Solis’s football career fizzled after stints with the Chiefs and the CFL’s B.C. Lions, he took the Blanchards’ advice and began training as a pro wrestler, in 1977. Proving a quick study, he excelled across the South until an impressed Andre the Giant brought a tape of Solis’s matches to show to WWF promoter Vince McMahon Sr. At just 26, with less than three years of experience, “Santana” had his big break.

Thus began a 17-year career that coincided with the WWE’s explosion from regional power to national sensation under McMahon’s son, Vince Jr. A fiery athlete and dependable performer, Santana twice won the company’s Intercontinental Championship, and he competed in the first match in WrestleMania history, defeating the Executioner in 1985. Santana and Hulk Hogan are the only two wrestlers to perform at the first nine WrestleMania events, but Solis remained a mid-level performer. In ’93, he realized that being repackaged as the more cartoonish El Matador—which included a week of bullfighting lessons in Mexico—hadn’t led to the marquee status he’d hoped for. “I said, ‘Vince, I think it’s time for me to go,’” Solis says. “Vince said, ‘I think you’re right.’”

## STAYING POWER

A fiery and entertaining performer, Santana dominated opponents for almost two decades before finding his second calling as a teacher (left).



After a few years wrestling for various independent promotions, Solis became a substitute teacher in 1997. For the last 14 years he has been a part-time salon owner and full-time Spanish teacher at Eisenhower Middle School in Roxbury Township, N.J., where he and his wife, Leah, have lived since ’83 and raised their three sons. He still performs a dozen weekends a year, typically at fund-raisers, but the only time Solis watches wrestling is when his students cajole him into projecting one of his old matches

on the classroom Smart Board. For autographs, however, students must stop by Santana’s hair salon, a business the Solis family has owned since ’96; Solis signs for free every Tuesday afternoon.

Last winter he coached Eisenhower’s boys’ basketball team to an undefeated season. But he pours most of his energy into at-risk students, inspired by what Mr. Sanchez did for him five decades ago. “Even if I only make a difference with one kid,” says Solis, “[it’s] worth it.” □

gave a stirring speech, but most of the event was leavened with good cheer. The Usos introduced Rikishi, and when the video screen behind the stage showed an image of the honoree's thonged moneymaker, his enormous and pockmarked behind, Jimmy Uso observed, "That right there put us through college."

Along with the paying crowd of more than 10,000, rows of former and current wrestlers were seated on the arena floor, heels and baby faces side by side. Dusty Rhodes, 69 and in one of his last public appearances before his death in June, said aloud as he sat down that he didn't miss the wrestling grind ("Forty-eight years was long enough!"), and the Miz, almost half Rhodes's age, wondered how good his favorite ball team, the Indians, would be this year. Jake the Snake Roberts arrived pythonless, but Sgt. Slaughter came wearing his camouflage and his sunglasses and his stiff-brimmed hat. Current superstar John Cena chatted with Hacksaw Jim Duggan, winner of the first ever Royal Rumble, in 1988, and Rowdy Roddy Piper leaned forward to say something to the Million Dollar Man, Ted DiBiase. Big Van Vader sat in the back row, squinting his 60-year-old eyes through his red leather mask while working his iPhone.

Hogan wore a slick double-breasted tux, and he led the induction of Randy Savage, recalling Macho Man's classic match with Ricky the Dragon Steamboat at WrestleMania III, in 1987. "I might have picked up Andre the Giant that night," said Hogan—which he did, to thunderous and incredulous applause—"but Randy Savage stole the show."



#### MASKING FOR TROUBLE

Fake? Behind his leather getup, Vader hides the athleticism of a former NFL O-lineman: The ex-Ram was known for his aerial moves.

Meanwhile, on the floor, Bryan sat holding the hand of his wife, the wrestling diva Brie Bella, and Cena had his arm around Brie's diva sister, Nikki. Everyone laughed at the idiot Bushwhackers and everyone cheered when Schwarzenegger, who has cameoed in the ring over the years, was inducted. ("I just love watching the wrestling," the Governor said backstage.) When the flamboyant Nature Boy Ric Flair, a 16-time world champion whose pimped-out ring robe lives at the Smithsonian, came to the stage, his trademark "Woool!" resounded from the near and far corners of the SAP Center.

Even after the four-hour program had drawn to a close and Rikishi and Kevin Nash and Triple H and Hogan and the Japanese legend Tatsumi Fujinami (also inducted) and others who'd been part of the night had gathered on stage for final photographs, the wrestlers on the arena floor did not want to leave. They mingled and talked among themselves. Two old-timers joked about all the froufrou food available at the weekend's gatherings—canapés, smoked fish, mille-feuille—and recalled how in the 1960s and '70s, when gnarly men like Harley Race ruled the roost, wrestlers were known to shoot blackbirds off telephone wires and then cook them on their cars' engine blocks on the drive to the next show. Dinner.

The wrestlers could have gone on talking all night about the way things were and the way things are in this crazy, bittersweet, beautiful, messed-up, brutal, nuthouse, one-of-a-kind "sports entertainment" racket that only they really know. Except that after a while some of the younger guys and some of the divas started to move off, talking about how they needed to get back to their rooms for a little rest, what with WrestleMania 31 just 18 hours away. □



## Madusa

*Though she's now blazing trails on dirt tracks rather than on wrestling mats, she's as dominant as ever*

BY DAN GREENE

ON A SUNDAY afternoon in Hamilton, Ont., the line across the dirt arena floor is four dozen long as fans wait to meet Madusa—Debrah Miceli on her driver's license but the Queen of Carnage around these parts. In two hours she will sit behind the wheel of her hot-pink monster truck, spinning donuts and smashing jalopies. It's all in a day's work at Monster Jam, the circuit in which she is a two-time champion. Among the event programs and miniature





## STILL GOT IT

Madusa was a menace on the mat, using her physical style to win three titles. She's been no less successful on the Monster Jam circuit.

plush trucks toted by autograph hounds are reminders of Miceli's previous incarnation, as a pro wrestler: magazines, posters and, emblazoned across one man's sky-blue T-shirt, a picture of a championship belt draped over the lip of a garbage can. "I love it!" Miceli shouts. "Can I sign the back?"

During the 14 years since she last laced up her wrestling boots, such crowds have followed Miceli across the globe as she pursued the second act of her sports-entertainment career. The suits who signed her to Monster Jam primarily to attract female fans couldn't have foreseen her staying power. "Anybody who thought she was a novelty doesn't know her," says longtime Monster Jam announcer Scott Douglass.

But back to the first act. In the mid-1980s Miceli quit her nursing studies to focus on wrestling, at first performing in dive bars and sleeping in her old black Ford. Within five years she was touring with the All-Japan Women's Pro Wrestling promotion—the spelling of her stage name was derived from made in the USA—where she honed

her aggressive style. In 1993 she signed with WWE (then called WWF), which changed her name to Alundra Blayze so the company could own the copyright. She vanquished a rotation of villainesses and was crowned women's champion three times. But in late '95, as WWE found itself on the financial ropes, the women's division was KO'd by budget cuts. "I was so hurt," says Miceli. "I gave everything. I just didn't understand it."

What followed would become industry legend. Ted Turner's World Championship Wrestling, always itching to strike at the competition, signed Miceli. At the behest of WCW president Eric Bischoff, Miceli celebrated her move by dropping the WWE women's belt into a trash bin on live TV. "That was the defining moment of my whole career," says Miceli, who was later WCW's first female cruiserweight champion. "The bitch who threw the title in the can."


After five years, though, Miceli grew frustrated with WCW's increasing preference for women wrestlers who were more eye

candy than athletes, and she began plotting her next move. It came in a fortuitous call from Monster Jam, where a former WCW executive remembered Miceli's love of Harleys and four-wheelers. At a tryout in Kill Devil Hills, N.C., Miceli almost flipped her truck, and climbed out to ask the company reps what they thought. She was hired on the spot.

In the 16 years since, she has paved the way for other female Monster Jam drivers—whose ranks have increased from two in 1999 to eight now—while earning world championships in 2004 and '05. "I'm in a man's business—twice," says Miceli. "And I've survived both."

She recently made amends with WWE, which produced the trashed-title T-shirt to commemorate her induction into its Hall of Fame last spring, and she is interested in wrestling again. Miceli is also working on her doctorate in naturopathy and studying to become a yogini; she recently shuttered her pet-grooming shop in Florida, but she may open another business when she and her husband, Alan Jonason, an Army command sergeant major stationed in Syria, settle into retirement.

In the meantime, she is working on a book about her career. She hopes her next chapter is the best yet. "I see myself transitioning into something else," she says. "Something greater and bigger." □



Photograph by  
**Matthew Putney**  
For Sports Illustrated

## **JACKED UP**

At 51 years old, and three decades after his major league debut, Canseco is a long way from the bright lights of the big leagues. But after everything, he can still put a charge in the ball.



# Jose Canseco

*He's been a feared slugger, a disgraced whistle-blower and a Twitter oddity. Now the six-time All-Star travels to minor league towns and indy ball fields, putting on a show—and it's the closest he'll ever again get to the major league game he changed forever*

**BY JACK DICKEY**

**I**T'S ONE of sports media's most recognizable set pieces: A superstar arrives in town and takes questions from a horde of thirsty scribes. *Will you bring this city a championship? What would you like to say to these long-suffering fans?* The version playing out at an Iowa ballpark one Wednesday in mid-June had all the superficial indicators of importance: The man in front of the microphones had hit 462 career home runs, been selected to six All-Star Games, written a best-selling book and twice appeared on the cover of this magazine. His signature traits—gobsmacking biceps and slick charm—pop just as they did the day he broke in. He is one of the few living players who can say, without prompt-

ing a giggle, that he changed the game of baseball.

And then 88-year-old Bob Brooks, the dean of the press pool covering the Class A Cedar Rapids Kernels, punched RECORD on an ancient cassette player and asked 50-year-old Jose Canseco a question about his lasting career memories. Moments later Canseco, who turned 51 on July 2, would head down to the field to compete in a pregame home run derby against amateur softball players from eastern Iowa—a contest he would lose to Fayette's Ryan Pennebaker, a 32-year-old project manager for John Deere. Welcome to the City of Five Seasons, buddy.

The Cedar Rapids Parks and Rec Home Run Derby was just one part of this Canseco-centric evening (which was also KCRG Weather Academy Night). The aging slugger would also sign autographs for fans, visit suites and appear on the local radio broadcast. Under his deal with the Kernels, he would be in a car back to the Hampton Inn by 8:45, with a check in hand for his appearance fee (payable only upon completion of said appearance). When asked about the check's size, Canseco told a writer to say he was paid \$10 million.

A brief detour into Canseconomics: The former player for the A's, Rangers,



Red Sox, Blue Jays, Devil Rays, Yankees and White Sox filed for bankruptcy in 2012, citing \$1.7 million in debt against less than \$21,000 in assets. He says, “You know, people ask, ‘Jose, you filed bankruptcy, where’d all the money go to?’ It’s real simple, guys. Taxes take away 40% right away. If you’re playing in Canada, like I did, it’s 50%. A divorce here or there, it’s \$7 million. Last time the stock market bottomed out, it’s \$11 million. Start calculating: cost of living, taking care of your family, taking care of your friends. Bad investments, which would be the stock market. Bad investments, which would be marriage. It all adds up to twentysomething million dollars.”

At the autograph table, Canseco drew a long line, although the one-item-per-person policy meant that the faces of some middle-aged men recurred and recurred. He signed balls and caps and cards, gloves and bats and old magazines. One fan brought a pamphlet titled *The Jose Canseco Story*; another brought a still from the episode of *The Simpsons* in which Canseco appeared in animated form. Lots of children too young to remember Canseco’s career or his postretirement infamy also made their way to the table, if only because he had a shiny silver Sharpie. Though Canseco did not personalize anything he signed (again, policy), the fans still wanted to tell him their stories. “Thanks for writing the book, Mr. Canseco,” one of them said. “It’s a great book.”

“I don’t read, but I read *Juiced*—it’s the best book I’ve ever read,” said another fan.

A man in an A’s shirt begged Canseco to do the Bash Brothers pose. He gave in. “Do you ever talk to Mark McGwire?” one man asked.

“No-o,” Canseco replied, drawing the word out. Later, in the suite, when a fan asked if he wanted a beer, he offered the same “No-o.” A woman asked him to come closer for a picture, and he joked, “What are you, with the IRS?”

**P**ROFESSIONAL ATHLETES often struggle with the transition to their second careers. Their earning power may plummet in concert with the rare physical gifts that made them stars, and that predicament—which a majority of Americans might gladly trade their own humdrum lives to face—can be genuinely unmooring.

Oh, if only those problems were all that Canseco had to overcome. Surely by now he would have conquered them, perhaps building a successful chain of Mazda dealerships along the California coast. But Canseco faced an additional set of challenges, most of his own making.

Is there anything Canseco won’t do now? “I didn’t do porn when I was asked to, a long time ago,” he says. “A bad B movie I won’t do. I mean, I was in *Sharknado 2* or 3, whichever that was.” (The film was actually *Piranha Sharks*, starring Kevin Sorbo, which owes a great deal of its DNA to *Sharknado* but is not in the *Sharknado* canon.)

Who does Canseco endorse for 2016? “I do something with the company ExtenZe,” he says. “Have you seen that commercial online?” No, who does he endorse in the presidential election? “You know what, I hate politics. This world would be so much better without politics. Seriously, we’ve got, what’s the idiot now, Trump, running for president?” (Canseco once was a contestant on Donald Trump’s reality show.)



*Canseco can't bend the surgically reattached finger, so he now swings with a middle finger extended from the bat, involuntarily flipping the bird to anyone who might care to watch him hit.*

Canseco’s inimitable cocktail of confidence, impulsiveness and shamelessness has landed him far from that quiet postcareer small-business life and further still from the game he once conquered and loved. It has landed him on *The Surreal Life*; in a mixed martial arts ring against 7' 2" Choi Hong-man (Canseco tapped out); and, on Oct. 28, 2014, in the emergency room at University Medical Center in Las Vegas. That night Canseco, a self-defense enthusiast, was cleaning one of his pistols, a custom Remington .45 with a gold-plated grip, and, well, he can take the story from here:

“You know, it’s funny. I didn’t realize I had shot my own finger off. I just put my gun back on the table and looked to see where the bullet went, because I was behind this huge desk. And all of a sudden I see my hand, blood spurting out. I said,



## WILD RIDE

Canseco's career has veered from A's star (far left) to beefcake, and from court (below) to the MMA ring (bottom) to minor league parks (right).



‘What the f---? Oh my god, I shot my finger off.’ ”

He held his left hand above his head and clamped it at the wrist, slowing the blood flow. Then he told his on-and-off fiancée, 28-year-old model and stuntwoman Leila Knight, those words we all dread having to tell our partners: “Listen, I’m sorry, but I just shot my finger off.” Knight was calm and understanding, Canseco says, given the circumstances.

He then went about the difficult work of trying to find the finger he’d blown off. He didn’t realize—thanks to a mixture of shock and numbness, he says—that the appendage was hanging against the back of his hand from an unsevered blood vessel. The doctors initially told him they’d have to amputate, but when he woke up from surgery the finger was still attached; its blood supply had been stronger than the doctors thought. They reattached the finger without a bone, then inserted bone from Canseco’s hip six months later.

As with many things involving Canseco, truth is stranger than fiction, except for the fiction Canseco himself crafts about the truth. He tweeted that after its reattachment, the finger fell off during a poker game; it didn’t. He also wrote that he was thinking of selling the finger (and the gun) on eBay; he didn’t. He said someone had filmed video of the finger falling off and sold it to his agent; no one had.

In any event the finger has since regained most of its normal functions. Canseco says he has some feeling in it, and no pain.

The only problem arises whenever Canseco grips a bat (which is fairly often for a player his age). He can’t bend the finger, so he swings with a middle finger extended from the bat, involuntarily flipping the bird to anyone who might care to watch him hit.

**C**ANSECO’S EXTRAORDINARY relationship with baseball may be more unusual than anyone’s this side of Pete Rose. Like Canseco, Rose lives in Las Vegas, where he signs autographs for a living. Canseco, when asked what he does for a living, says, “Wow. I guess I’m different, because I love to stay in shape.” Canseco still plays baseball, suiting up on odd weekends for independent clubs—this year, the Sonoma Stompers and the Pittsburg Diamonds—to fill seats and swell the box score. He says he cannot, however, sit through a whole game on television (that “No-o” again).

The A’s drafted Canseco in the 15th round in 1982, and by the time he played his first full major league season, in ’86 (when he hit 33 home runs and won Rookie of the Year), the team had begun its transformation into the juggernaut that would reach three straight World Series, from ’88 to ’90. Tony La Russa took over as manager in midseason of ’86, and a young third baseman named Mark McGwire made his debut in August.

Along with McGwire, Dave Stewart, Dennis Eckersley and the Hendersons (Rickey and Dave), Canseco helped refashion the A’s into a dominant, sweet-swinging band of outlaws. In 1988, when Canseco hit .307 and unanimously won the American League MVP Award, he registered the



### GATHER ROUND

Canseco, holding court at the Kernels' home field, once claimed steroids were great for his health and career; he now says they weakened his endocrine system.

first 40-homer, 40-steal season in baseball history. Aside from his occasionally apathetic defense in the outfield, Canseco almost seemed to be a modern-day answer to Willie Mays. He and McGwire were christened the Bash Brothers for their uncommon power, and the muscles that abetted that power.

What Canseco and McGwire knew then, even if the rest of the world did not, was that those muscles, and by extension at least some of those home runs, were the product of an assiduous anabolic steroid regimen. What neither could have known then was that Canseco's MVP season, which ended when he was just 24, would be the high point of his career. After that he bounced around baseball, battling injuries and ignominy. In 1993 a fly ball bounced off his head and over the outfield fence for a home run. Three days later he made a one-inning pitching appearance that would cause him to need Tommy John surgery. His off-the-field life included arrests for reckless driving, illegal possession of a handgun, aggravated battery, and simple battery (three times), as well as two divorces. By 2002 his career was over, 38 home runs away from the 500 figure that was, at that point, good for automatic induction to the Hall of Fame.

That home run shortfall was one by-product of what he saw as his deliberate blackballing from the game. So after one failed comeback and then another, Canseco set about altering the game for good, by way of a book.

*Juiced*, which was released in February 2005, was a firecracker. It landed Canseco on *Today* and *60 Minutes*. It preceded most of the steroid hoopla: the Congressional hearing, the Mitchell Report, the raid on Jason Grimsley's house, Rafael Palmeiro's positive test. Before the book, all baseball fans had to go on was Ken Caminiti's confession in SI, leaked BALCO grand jury testimony and the vials and syringes in Manny Alexander's wayward glove compartment.

What Canseco gave readers, and a grateful publisher, was the kind of book baseball had inadvertently ensured by turning a blind eye to performance-

enhancers. Canseco testified to the great power of these drugs, detailing how they had made him superhuman (Better at baseball! Better in bed!) and envisioning a future in which all athletes would gobble them up with glee. (Canseco has gone back on that now, saying steroids ravaged his endocrine system and may have had little to do with his baseball success.)

With the grace and restraint of a juicehead in a china shop, the disgruntled Canseco named names: McGwire, Jason Giambi, Roger Clemens and Rafael Palmeiro, among others.

Each had plausible deniability at the time, but by the end of the decade all would be exposed as users. And the league would lurch toward cleaning itself up.

But the author now says he wishes he hadn't named a soul, and he wishes he hadn't published the book. "Being completely severed from Major League Baseball, probably for life—meaning affiliate ball, I can't coach, I can't teach, I can't be hitting coach or manager or anything—in that way it cost me a lot," he says. "But I told the truth, and the game is better for it now."

Canseco's exile is real enough. McGwire is the Dodgers' hitting coach; Giambi was in the running for a manager's job; the Giants have welcomed Barry Bonds back as a spring training instructor. A one-off appearance at a Class A stadium may be the closest Canseco will ever again get to reaching the show.

So before the home run derby in Cedar Rapids, in the batting cage under the stands, Canseco showed a gaggle of Twins prospects what baseball was missing. Thirty-four-year-old Tommy Watkins, the team's batting coach, volunteered to throw to Canseco. Swinging one-handed, with an open stance, tapping his toe, wielding a Dudley senior bat he brought himself, Canseco rocketed ball after ball into the netting, each shot crisp and loud, like a bolt of lightning splitting a tree.

One player started filming on his iPhone. "How old is he? Fifty?" another player asked.

"Holy s---," yet another muttered, hushed into reverence by the mighty swing of the strangest baseball player alive. □



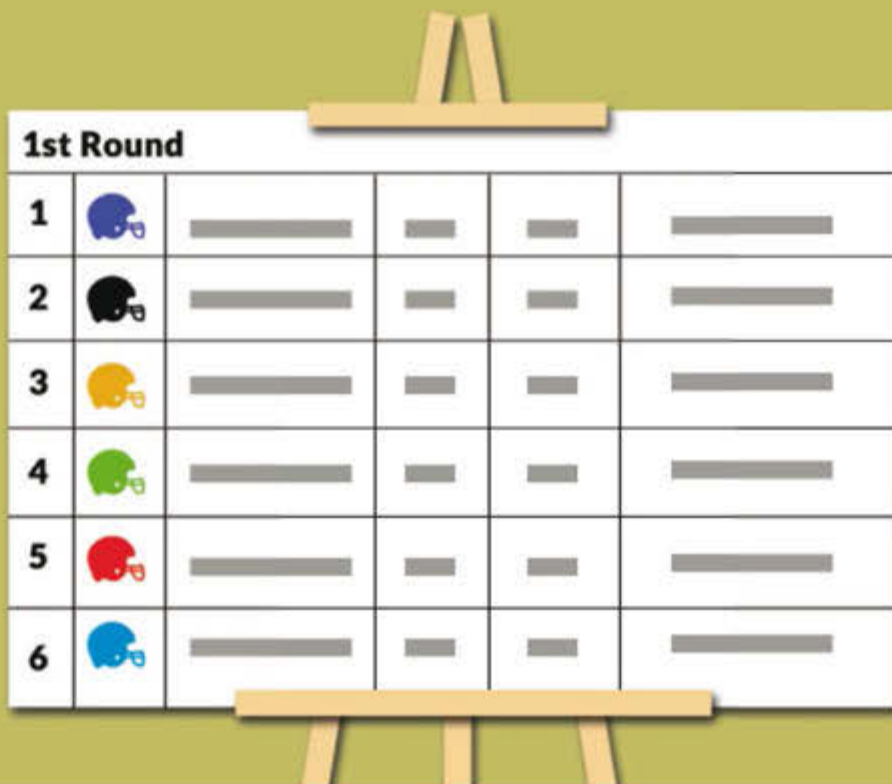
# Saving People Money Since 1936

**... that's when the first pro football draft happened.**







GEICO has been serving up great car insurance and fantastic customer service for more than 75 years. Get a quote and see how much you could save today.

geico.com | 1-800-947-AUTO | local office

**GEICO®**



The image shows a wooden easel holding a draft board for the 1st Round of the NFL Draft. The board is a table with 6 rows and 5 columns. The first column contains the round number (1-6) and a helmet icon. The next four columns are for selecting a team, a player, a position, and a college. All cells are empty except for the first column.

1st Round				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

Some discounts, coverages, payment plans and features are not available in all states or all GEICO companies. GEICO is a registered service mark of Government Employees Insurance Company, Washington, D.C. 20076; a Berkshire Hathaway Inc. subsidiary. © 2015 GEICO







# Marlin Briscoe

*From the bottom of the depth chart he battled to get on the field, finished second in the Rookie of the Year voting—then lost his job. The first black QB to start in the modern era had a bittersweet career, but that was only the beginning of his hardships*

**BY PHIL TAYLOR**

Photograph by  
Carl Iwasaki  
For Sports Illustrated

**MAGIC MAN**  
Briscoe's boldest  
trick: trying to  
persuade the  
Broncos that the  
world was ready  
for a black QB. In  
the end, Denver  
didn't believe.

**T**

**HE VOLUME** on the television didn't carry well in the large, open room, but Marlin Briscoe didn't need to hear Al Michaels's play-by-play to grasp the significance of the moment. It was Jan. 31, 1988, and the Redskins' Doug Williams was about to become the first African-American quarterback to win a Super Bowl, 20 years after Briscoe had been the first black quarterback to start a modern pro football game.

As the final seconds ticked off in Washington's 42–10 victory over Briscoe's old team, the Broncos, he wiped tears from his eyes. In 1968,

Denver had taken him in the 14th round of the AFL draft with plans to shift him to the secondary, even though he'd dismantled defenses with his passing and running at Division II Omaha. In that era, putting a man on the moon seemed realistic. Putting a black man at QB? In a pro football game? Now, that was a fantasy.

If Williams's accomplishment hadn't put an end to that backward thinking, Briscoe thought, at least it ensured that African-American passers would get something closer to equal treatment. A black college quarterback wouldn't have to negotiate with a team just for the chance to try out at the position, as Briscoe had done. Black QBs would no longer be cast aside the way Briscoe had been after his first pro season, when he started Denver's last four games, finished second in Rookie of the Year voting and then wasn't even invited to the team's off-season QB meetings. The Broncos had simply decided, without explanation, that Briscoe wasn't a passer anymore. They granted his request to be released, and he signed with the Bills, who converted him to a receiver. He had an outstanding eight-year

career as a wideout, winning two Super Bowls with the Dolphins and playing in one Pro Bowl. But Briscoe never again took a snap under center.

In that moment in front of the television, as he watched Williams accomplish what he'd never been given a fair chance to do, whatever resentment Briscoe felt about his mistreatment fell away. An ugly wall was crumbling, and he was proud to have initiated the demolition. "I felt that my history helped give Doug the opportunity to be in that position," Briscoe says. "It was a powerful feeling."

It was also a bittersweet one. The tears that ran down Briscoe's cheeks weren't of pride alone. When the game concluded, guards ordered him and his fellow inmates out of the common area, and Briscoe returned to his cell in San Diego County jail.

**WHO KNOWS** all the ways that racism can damage a man? Or the ways in which fighting it can make him stronger? There is no straight line from the discrimination Briscoe faced to his incarceration, from his addiction to his redemption—but

those things cannot be completely unrelated, can they? Didn't the same strength of character that allowed him to beat a racist system, if only briefly, also enable him to conquer his drug demons?

Briscoe, 69, doesn't completely accept such theories. "I wasn't bitter," he says. "Bitter people quit. I was *disappointed*; if I was bitter, I wouldn't have rolled up my sleeves and learned another position. I grew up in the '50s and '60s, when black people had a tough road no matter what career they pursued. We expected to have to go through closed doors. We knew we wouldn't get a fair shake."



Briscoe says this on a quiet morning in Long Beach, Calif., sitting at his kitchen table with his cup of coffee and his crossword puzzles, beginning the daily routine he has followed ever since retiring from his job as the director of a Long Beach Boys & Girls Club three years ago. Life is calm now, and Briscoe, a soft-spoken man with closely cropped gray hair and just a few more pounds around the middle than he had during his playing days, is content. The drug habit that led to two brief jail sentences seems like a different lifetime; he says he hasn't used an illegal substance in nearly 30 years. Later he will pick up his wife Michelle's granddaughter from kindergarten (he was married twice before and has two adult children of his own), and there will be a round of golf in the afternoon. Phone conversations will follow with the producers who are working on a movie about his life. The film's working title, *The Magician*, refers to a box of used sports gear that Briscoe's cousin gave him when he was a boy in Omaha. That receptacle came to be known as the magic box, and young Marlin, because of his ability to excel with anything he pulled out of it—baseball, football, boxing gloves—became the Magician.

There is a finished screenplay by Gregory Allen Howard, who worked on the scripts for *Remember the Titans* and *Ali*, but the production company is haggling to get the NFL's cooperation on the project. League officials are concerned that some of the darker periods of Briscoe's life aren't exactly PG-13, according to producer Doug Falconer, who says that the film will begin production, with or without the league's blessing, in early 2016. There is no question, though, that Briscoe has led a life of cinematic arcs. He has gone from the sandlots of Omaha to a Super Bowl at the Los Angeles Coliseum, from the crack house to the White

House, from being mocked by his drug dealers to being praised by President Obama. "It's been an A-to-Z experience," he says. "I've made some of my own breaks and tried to take responsibility for my own mistakes."

There may not be a cause-and-effect correlation between what was done to him and what he did to himself, but it is all connected, like the boxes on the crosswords he loves. Briscoe completes four of them every morning, in ink. "It keeps my brain active," he says. He considers himself lucky that he shows no ill effects from head trauma that so many former players suffer.

"It's almost funny: The feeling back when we played was that blacks didn't have the intelligence to play quarterback," says receiver Eric Crabtree,

*There is no straight line from the discrimination Briscoe faced to his incarceration, from his addiction to his redemption—but those things can't be completely unrelated, can they?*

Briscoe's teammate in Denver. "But Marlin's brain was probably his greatest strength. He was always thinking. Even when he was talking to you, it seemed like he was deep in thought."

When the Broncos drafted him, Briscoe longed to line up at quarterback, the position at which he'd thrived all his life—but Denver's director of player personnel, Fred Gehrke, told the rookie that his new coaches envisioned him as a corner. Despite having only briefly played defensive back, Briscoe conceded he would convert, but on one condition: that he be allowed to participate in the team's three-day quarterback tryout at the start of training camp. He knew the competition would be open to the press and the public; the more people who saw him as a passer, the better. Even if his own coaches had made up their minds, maybe someone—a reporter, a scout—would notice him, and word of his skills would get around.

Feeling they had nothing to lose, the Broncos agreed to guarantee Briscoe a tryout, and for three days that summer he worked out with seven other quarterbacks. By Briscoe's recollection, he was the last man to be given a turn in





to impress, coach Lou Saban installed Briscoe as his QB3, in case of emergency.

In the third game of the season, at Mile High Stadium against the Boston Patriots, Briscoe was in his customary place on the sideline, watching as QB Jim LeClair's offense sputtered: 5-of-17 passing, two interceptions. Denver was trailing 17-10 at the start of the fourth quarter and about to get the ball back when Saban turned to Briscoe and said, "Get ready."

The milestone moment was greeted mostly with silence. There was no notable reaction from the fans, most of whom probably didn't notice when the 5' 11", 178-pound Briscoe entered the game. The Denver huddle, however, was different. "We knew what was happening, what it meant," says Crabtree. "As a receiver, I wanted to do well for Marlin's sake. There was a pressure, a tension we all felt—except for him. He came into the huddle like he'd been there before. The way he talked, I call it his feel-good voice: confident, in command. It was, *Here's what we're going to do. Now let's go do it.*"

Whatever Briscoe was doing, it had to be done quickly. Beyond the matter of the clock, he says he knew, "If I didn't make something happen right away, Saban was going to [call on] somebody else." He needed an immediate completion and went with the play he felt most sure of, a slant to Crabtree that went for 22 yards. Briscoe had been given so few practice reps that there were only a half-dozen plays he was comfortable calling; instead, he relied heavily on his elusiveness and improvisational skills. "Sandlot football," he says. "That's

## LEADER OF THE PACK

Briscoe no longer sports his NFL Afro, and that mustache has filled out and grayed, but those who know—starting with POTUS—still see the trailblazer in him.

every drill. "The others would get 10 long-range throws, 10 medium-range and 10 short-range," he says. "Then I'd get my turn, throw five of each, and somebody would yell, 'O.K., next drill!'"

But Briscoe's deep balls and his ability to pass well on the run, a rare skill at the time, did get the attention of the fans and some of the press. "Briscoe, a negro quarterback from Omaha, shows a strong arm and ability to scramble," wrote *Denver Post* columnist Dick Connor. "The Broncos have other plans for him, but he could be a good insurance policy at quarterback."

After the three days, however, Briscoe was told that he would be with the secondary when camp began, and he accepted the news without argument. "I had no real illusions," he says, "but I knew I had shown them I could play. I thought maybe that would make it a little easier for the next black player who came through."

Briscoe pulled a hamstring early in training camp, and it proved to be a stroke of luck; he never did establish himself as a defensive back. When No. 1 quarterback Steve Tensi was injured in the preseason and his backups failed

all I could do with such a short list." On his second drive he marched the Broncos down the field, narrowing the score to 20-17 on a 12-yard scramble; then, with time enough for just one play remaining and the ball at midfield, he nearly completed the comeback, dashing his way down to Boston's 10-yard line as the clock expired. In the end, Briscoe accounted for 94 total yards and a TD in less than 10 minutes.

"The thing I remember was that the support I got from my teammates and the fans was amazing," he says of an outing that *The New York Times* headlined a HISTORIC DEBUT. "I had five white linemen, and I could hear them saying to each other, 'Nobody touches Marlin.' After the game, fans were coming up to me, wishing me well. Back then the fear was always that a black quarterback would divide the team—some white players would have problems with it, attendance would hurt because some white fans would stop coming. None of that happened."

Whatever public animosity existed, Briscoe's teammates tried to shield him from it. "Marlin used to say he was lucky he didn't get the kind of hate mail that other black quarterbacks got," Crabtree says. "I finally had to tell him: that was because I used to go to his locker and sort through his mail before he did."

Briscoe's debut earned him a start the following week against the Bengals, but he struggled against Cincinnati, and in the second half Saban reinstated Tensi. The veteran remained at the helm, with Briscoe getting cleanup reps, over the next five games, until Tensi broke his collarbone in a 43-7 Week 9 loss to the Raiders. Briscoe started the final four games and finished the season with 1,589 yards passing plus a Denver rookie-record 14 TD throws.

After the season Briscoe went home to Omaha to enroll in the last few college

classes he needed to complete his degree in education. While he was there, a cousin who lived in Denver called him and told him that Saban was conducting quarterback meetings. “It was the first I heard about it,” Briscoe says. “So I got on a plane, went to the team office, sat outside the room where the meetings were being held and just waited. When Saban came out, he couldn’t even look me in the eye. That said it all. I knew I wasn’t in their plans.”

Briscoe asked for his release, which the Broncos eventually granted, and he joined the Bills, knowing that he had no chance to play quarterback: Buffalo already had two veterans, Jack Kemp and Tom Flores, as well as an African-American rookie, James Harris, who would become Briscoe’s roommate and lifetime friend. “At first, Marlin was as bitter a person as I’d ever met,” Harris says. “He was hurt by what had happened. He would tell me, ‘Don’t trust them. You can play good, and they’re going to cut you anyway. They don’t want a black quarterback.’”

Briscoe ultimately accepted his switch to receiver, spending his postpractice hours watching film of elite wideouts like Lance Alworth and Paul Warfield. By 1970, his third year in the league, he was one of the best receivers in the newly merged NFL: An All-Pro that season, Briscoe ranked second in catches (57) and yards (1,036). Buffalo traded him to Miami for a first-round pick in ’71, and a year later Briscoe caught four TDs for the Dolphins team that pulled off the only undefeated season in NFL history. (He also completed all three of his pass attempts on trick plays that year.) Briscoe earned a second Super Bowl ring with Miami the following season, and in ’76 he announced his retirement, at 31. He’d enjoyed a distinguished career and earned a college degree; with a job as a bond broker in Los Angeles, and newly married, he transitioned smoothly into postfootball life—it seemed.

But retirement meant that Briscoe didn’t have to be as careful about his body anymore. He had invested well and was raking in money with his new career; he had the means and the freedom to keep up with friends who were living fast.

The cocaine was recreational at first, then essential. Coke became crack, “from social to the street,” he says, and the money disappeared, along with most of his friends. Briscoe found himself panhandling on the streets, where dealers nicknamed him 17–0, in reference to his perfect season with the Dolphins. He swallowed the mockery; it was part of the price of his addiction. “The one thing I have to hang on to from that time is that I never committed a crime to get money to support my habit,” he says. “At least I held on to those values.”

Still, Briscoe spiraled downward. He lost his Super Bowl rings, both used as collateral for a loan he couldn’t repay. He was arrested twice, in 1988 and ’89, for possession of small amounts of cocaine. On one occasion, he says, he was held at gunpoint for a weekend by dealers who insisted he owed them money; eventually they robbed him and threw him out of a van. But not even that near-death experience motivated him to quit. Rehab attempts arranged by friends like Flores failed.



#### CATCHING HELL

*It wasn't what he set out to do, but Briscoe still excelled at receiver: After an All-Pro season with Buffalo he moved on to Miami, grabbing four TDs in the epic 1972 campaign.*

**WHO KNOWS** what finally made Briscoe go clean? Maybe it was the same instinct that pushed him to embrace a move to receiver. “If they weren’t going to let me play quarterback, that was the only way I was going to survive in the league,” he says. Breaking the hold that drugs had on him—that was the only way he would survive, period.

On the day he was released from his final jail term in San Diego, Briscoe received a \$500 wire from Alworth, the Chargers star with whom he’d become friends late in his playing days. Briscoe

*Briscoe panhandled on the streets, where dealers nicknamed him 17–0, in reference to his stint with the 1972 Dolphins.*

collected the cash and walked through a park to meet a friend waiting to pick him up. It was the same park where he’d often bought coke and crack, and many familiar dealers were still there. He clutched the wad of money in his pocket, tempted; the 10-minute walk to the other side of the park felt like an hour. “I knew I had to keep walking,” he says. “If I stopped, it was over for me. Something in me made me keep walking.”

That was 25 years ago, and Briscoe insists that he has never used drugs since, having quit without the help of a formal rehab program. Once he was clean, he connected with a friend who helped run a Boys & Girls Club. Briscoe eventually took over as the director of a club in Watts, then moved over to the Long Beach outfit. “The most fulfilling work you could ask for,” he says of the days he spent mentoring kids and designing athletic programs for them.

Briscoe’s short breakthrough in 1968 has been overshadowed by the black quarterbacks who followed him, but he hasn’t been forgotten. He was at the White House in 2013, being honored with the rest of the undefeated 1972 Dolphins, when Obama shook hands with each of the players. “I know you,” the President said as he reached Briscoe. “You’re a trailblazer.”

The description is accurate, but Briscoe’s original nickname will always fit best. He is the Magician, who did not allow himself to disappear. And sometimes that is the greatest trick of all. □



**Sports Illustrated**  
P R E S E N T S

# FALL IS COMING ON SALE NOW

AMERICA'S BEST FANTASY GUIDE  
*Open Only If You Can Handle Success*



**Sports Illustrated**  
P R E S E N T S

SPORTS ILLUSTRATED'S  
**TOP 258  
PLAYERS**  
FOR 2015

# FANTASY FOOTBALL

2015

**OUT'S TAKE**  
On Every  
Team's Offense

**EXPERT ANALYSIS**  
Of Every  
Draftable Player

**SLEEPERS**  
And Busts You  
Should Bypass

ISSN 1045-5414



**GRONK**  
Back on top at  
tight end



**PETERSON**  
Prediction: a  
strong return



**GORDON**  
Surefire rookie  
of the year



**BRYANT**  
Definitely  
a catch



**MO**  
Fo









# Drew Henson

*He was a two-sport phenom who never made his mark in either one as a pro (though he did make millions). Now he's back in the game, bird-dogging for his old baseball team, trying to find future studs and sweating the details*

**BY PETE THAMEL**

Photograph by  
Chip Litherland  
For Sports Illustrated

## SCOUT'S TAKE

The son of a football coach and a gym teacher, Henson follows about 15 teams for the Yankees from his base in Tampa.

**I**T'S THIRSTY THURSDAY at Bright House Field in Clearwater, Fla. Women with sunburned shoulders and wedge heels clomp around the ballpark with a drink in each hand. Hooters waitresses serve a corporate party in a section near the third base dugout. Silver-haired dudes in Tommy Bahama shirts gravitate toward the two-for-one specials at the straw-roofed bar looming over the leftfield stands. It feels as if happy hour is masquerading as a baseball game.

Seven rows behind home plate Drew Henson—the former Yankees third baseman and Cowboys quarterback—is as oblivious to the revelry as the fans are to him. A white towel over his shoulder, he cracks a lemon-lime Monster energy drink to stave off the heat of a soupy May evening while he evaluates the Clearwater Threshers (a Phillies affiliate) and Charlotte Stone Crabs (Rays) of the Class A Florida State League. Henson, 35, once drew comparisons with the Broncos' John Elway and the Phillies' Mike Schmidt. Now he's working for the Yankees as a scout—one of the defining prospects of the past generation trying to identify the stars of the next one.

Minutes before the first pitch a thunderstorm chases Henson under cover, where he pulls up one of his four iPhone weather apps and laughs about how his new job requires him to forecast more than playing potential. “Hurry up and wait,” he says.

Henson knows the feeling. In the rush to fill the impossible expectations that came with his astonishing career statistics at Brighton (Mich.)

High—52 touchdown passes and 5,662 yards and a then national record 70 home runs—Henson didn't stick to a single sport long enough to allow him to thrive as a pro. He'll never know the answer to the million-dollar question, as he calls it: What if he'd dedicated the raw talent in his 6' 5", 220-pound body to just one game? Instead, his final MLB and NFL statistics serve as a cruel tease: one major league hit (a single off Orioles lefty Eric DuBose in 2003) and one NFL touchdown pass (to wide receiver Jeff Robinson against the Ravens in '04). Each ball sits in his home office.

He wound up less of a star and more of a stargazer. He split snaps with Tom Brady (Michigan), fielded alongside Derek Jeter (New York) and passed to Keyshawn Johnson (Dallas). He played for three Hall of Fame coaches—Lloyd Carr, Joe Torre and Bill Parcells—and signed with two of the most driven owners in sports, George Steinbrenner and Jerry Jones. (Henson's mother, Carol, once asked of the man everyone called Mr. Steinbrenner, "George, what do you think of your character on *Seinfeld*?" Drew and multiple Yankees officials nearly choked on their steaks.)

"I've had so many different experiences and played for different coaches and franchises," Hen-

### TAKING THE LONG VIEW

He was the starting QB at Michigan but left to play for the Yanks, who called him up from the minors for just eight games.



son says over tacos one night. "I've seen what's worked and what hasn't worked." Then he adds with a wry smile, "And I've been on the 0–16 Lions."

That woeful 2008 team in Detroit was Henson's last gasp. In the spring of '01 he left Michigan football after three seasons to pursue baseball full-time. A righthanded hitter, he played 501 games in the minors but only eight in the big leagues. Then, as he was showing signs of breaking through in baseball—Henson hit 40 doubles and 14 home runs in Triple A in '03—he walked away from the remaining \$12 million of a six-year, \$17 million contract to try the NFL because he missed having a ball in his hand. He signed with the Cowboys for \$3.5 million. But a lack of reps and three years away from the gridiron limited his chance for success. He played for the Cowboys, Vikings and Lions, starting just once. "There's no doubt in my mind that if he had even played one more year [in Ann Arbor]," says Carr, "he would have been very successful in football."

The Lions cut Henson days after picking Matthew Stafford No. 1 in the 2009 draft, prompting an interval of travel and self-discovery. With his wife, Madeleine, he hopscotched the globe with a spontaneity that a regimented sports life had never allowed. They blew off a flight because they were on a hot streak at the blackjack tables in Macau, watched Muay Thai fighting in



Bangkok and saw Drew's favorite soccer team, Barcelona, eliminate Real Madrid in the 2011 Champions League semifinals. "It was almost like doing retirement in reverse," Madeleine says.

**A**T HOME in Dallas, Henson dabbled in finance and broadcasting, but he missed the camaraderie and competition of sports. He called the Yankees in the late spring of 2012, and they hired him to help coach during the Instructional League that fall—meaning the day after he and Madeleine told friends and family they were pregnant, they announced they were moving to Tampa, where they now live with two-year-old daughter Perry. Henson worked as a hitting coach in the Gulf Coast League in 2013 and '14, then transitioned to scouting this season. "You don't know where it's going to lead," Henson says. "But I like the thought of putting teams together and profiling the right types of guys. I find it fascinating."

Henson doesn't enjoy delving into the psychology of his career—"That's been done," he says—but Madeleine saw a change once he started going to the park again every day. "When





*He'll never know the answer to the million-dollar question: What if he'd dedicated the raw talent in his 6' 5", 220-pound body to just one game?*

he was done playing, it kind of felt like, Why was I given all this talent, and it didn't turn out the way I thought?" she says. "I felt like there was a period of searching. Going back with the Yankees was kind of like that *aha* moment."

Earlier this year New York paired Henson with veteran scout Joe Caro, and the duo met for two to three hours a couple of times a week. Caro's advice ranged from prudent—sign up for Marriott and Hilton rewards programs—to practical. "That dude can sweat with anyone," says Caro, 56, who has been with the Yankees for 22 years. "I told him, 'You're going to need more than a handkerchief. Don't be afraid to take a towel from the hotel room.'" Henson, an eager student, arrives at the stadium with a white towel draped on his shoulder à la John Thompson Jr.

**S**couting a baseball game is an intricate operation, which Henson is still learning. Splayed in front of him in Clearwater are three charts, each a different color, that he fills out during the game. There's one for each pitcher and the last is to evaluate the Charlotte hitters. (Henson says experienced scouts can do both teams' hitters at once.) He tracks every pitch by type and notes the arm action, arm angle, location, delivery and velocity. He uses a stopwatch to time batters running to first, catchers throwing to second and the pitchers' release to the plate. "It's slowing down for me," he says. "It was going real fast the first few months and still is at some points."

Caro thinks his student is progressing just fine. "He struck me as a humble guy who wants to do well at his craft," he says. "Lots of times very good players do not become very good coaches or scouts. They never had to work at it."

Henson has embraced the scout's life and the challenge of projecting what a 17-year-old prospect might develop into at 25. He covers about 15 minor and major league teams and will cover them for five games—to see each starter—and then files a report on all 25 players that takes 30 to 40 minutes per man. Henson, like many former pros, had no idea how detailed a scout's work was. "I'd like to go back and see some of my grades at different ages," he says. "It may have helped."

Any objective input would have been useful to cut through the attention, expectations and notoriety Henson began to attract in high school. SI profiled Henson in 1998, when he was 18, citing the number of Yahoo! search results his name

generated to quantify him as the first über-recruit of the Internet age. Even at the Yankees' Triple A affiliate in Columbus, Ohio, the former Wolverine heard boos from Buckeyes fans during every at bat. These days he's only recognized by the occasional octogenarian memorabilia junkie who'll ask him to sign cards. Taking two-week trips to Jacksonville; Charleston, S.C.; Myrtle Beach, S.C.; Hickory, N.C.; and Raleigh can mean that some days his only

in-person conversation is scout talk between innings. ("Was that a slider or a slurve?") He has seen the endless promotions to enliven parks, from *Game of Thrones* night in Durham, N.C., to *Frozen* night in Bowling Green, Ky. Instead of monotony or loneliness, Henson has found fulfillment. "It's fun," he says. "I'm getting to do something I love, in an organization I grew up rooting for and playing for."

The feeling is reciprocated by the Yankees, who value Henson's work ethic and perspective. Henson made more than \$10 million in his playing days and invested well, which may make his willingness to traipse to small-town ballparks night after night seem strange. But Henson grew up in sports. His father, Dan, was a college football assistant, and his mother worked as a high school phys-ed teacher. "Drew doing this isn't a head-scratcher if you know him," says Billy Eppler, the Yankees' assistant general manager.

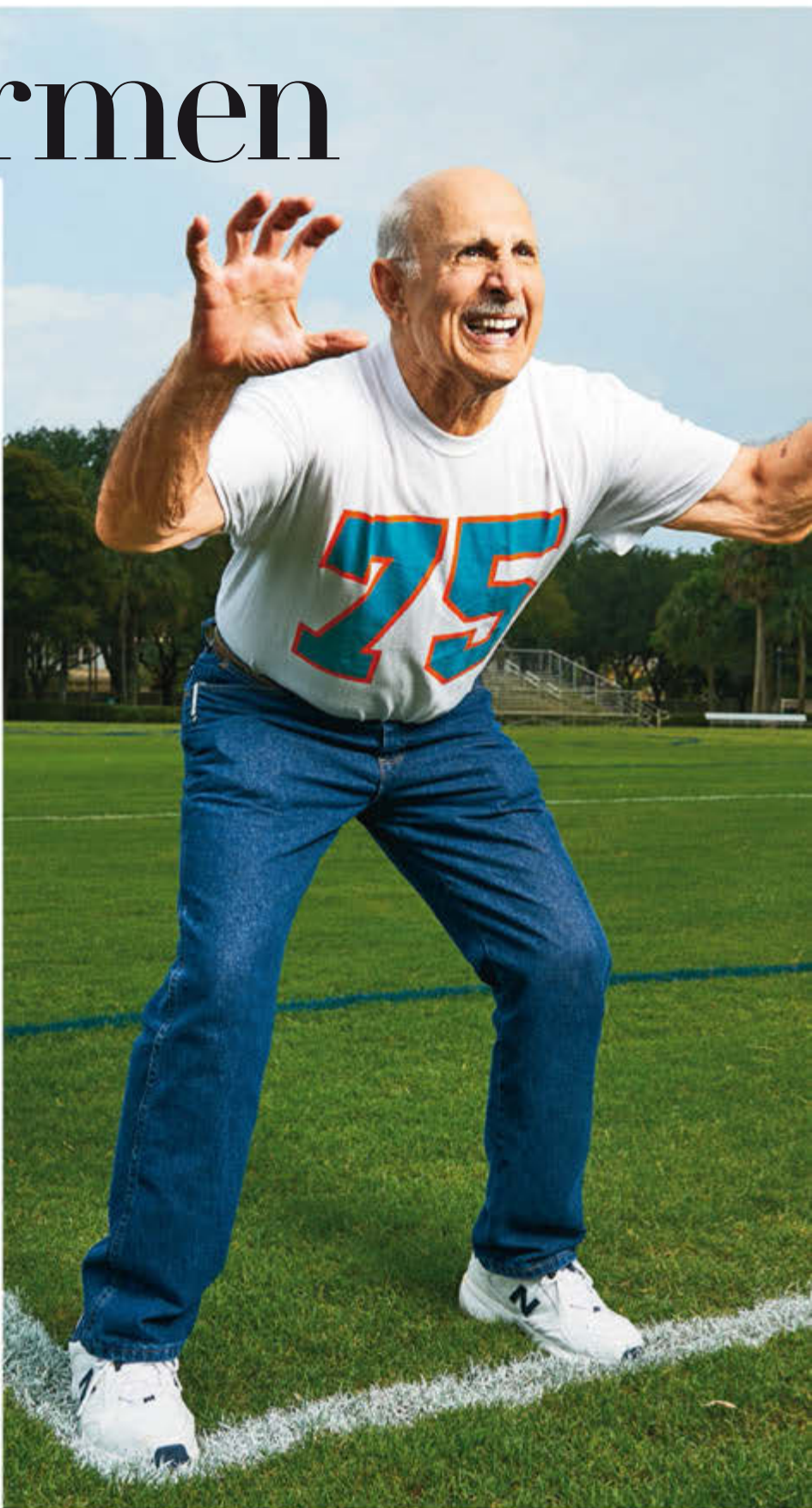
Henson is new to his job, but he has hopes of advancing. "I'd like to be in the room sharing an opinion with people who work for a major league club," he says. For now, he sweats through Thirsty Thursday—another night in another park—and relishes the grunt work. It feels good to be back in the game. □

# Chairmen

## Of the Cardboard

*They're hardly a Hall of Fame crew; they rarely even get recognized at Starbucks. But slap a sombrero on one of them, hand him a saxophone or a novelty-sized glove, and—Hey! I know that guy. They're the players—mostly journeymen (39 combined stops) and utilitymen (35 positions)—whose faces you remember from collectible cards, their backs stained with bubble-gum sugar. And they want you to know that they appreciate your love.*

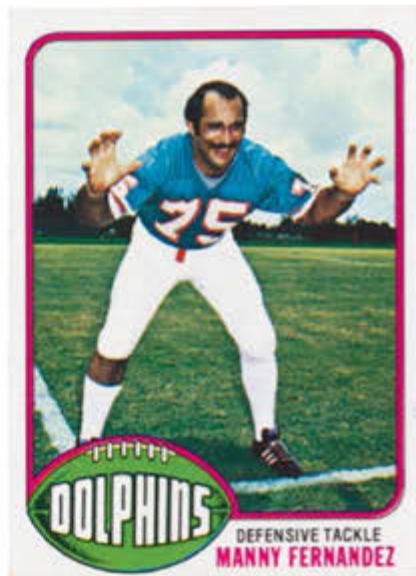
**BY BEN BASKIN**







OCTAVIAN CANTILLI FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (FERNANDEZ); THE TOPPS COMPANY, INC. (FERNANDEZ AND GAMBLE CARDS); KEVIN LILES FOR SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (GAMBLE)



## Manny Fernandez 1976 TOPPS

Eight seasons as a Dolphins defensive lineman; two-time Super Bowl champ. Now 68, he lives on 80 acres in Ellaville, Ga., where he loves to hunt—and, he says, “that’s pretty much it.”

“I have very little recollection of [that day] at all. They did one every summer; it was just another photo shoot to me. I think they told me what to do; I didn’t come up with that pose. We were doing two-a-day practices in 100° heat, and I just wanted to get back in the AC. . . . I get cards every single day in the mail to be autographed. They send me all sorts of different cards, but this one’s in there a lot. Sometimes they send cards that I’m not even on.

I got one the other day of [Raiders receiver] Mervyn Fernandez. That was probably a little bit of a mishap.”



## Oscar Gamble 1976 TOPPS

Seventeen seasons as an outfielder with seven teams. Now 65, he lives in Montgomery, Ala., and bides his time fishing.

“After [that photo] the Yankees wouldn’t issue me a uniform; they told me I had to get a haircut and meet with Mr. Steinbrenner. I was supposed to do a commercial for Afro Sheen, and I said I wanted to wear the Afro through spring training, do the commercial, then I’d cut it. Mr. Steinbrenner said, ‘No, you’re going to cut it right now.’ He’d pay for everything, including the commercial fee.

Elston Howard [one of the coaches] took me to get the haircut. I think it was about \$87, even though the haircut back then was about \$10—it took that long to cut it all.”



## Jay Johnstone 1984 FLEER

Twenty seasons as an outfielder with eight teams; two-time World Series champ. Now 68, he owns a charity sports-collectibles company in Burbank, Calif.

"I was with the Cardinals in spring training, 1974. A couple of guys got hurt, so I got a chance to play, and I went on one of my rare hitting streaks. Lou Brock said, 'I really like the way you're playing—I'm going to get you one of my famous Brockabrella hats.' Ten years later [after the card], Brock called me and said 'Thanks!' because now everybody wanted a Brockabrella. I asked, 'Do I get a piece of the action?' And he said, 'Yeah, I'll send you a beer.' That's good enough for me; Lou was one of the class guys. Plus, Budweiser has been sending me a case of beer every year since."



## Brian Harper 1993 UPPER DECK

Sixteen seasons as a catcher for seven teams; won '91 World Series with the Twins. Now 55, he's the hitting coach for the Cubs' Triple A affiliate, in Des Moines, and an avid runner who's completed three half marathons.

"When we were on the road we had a 5 o'clock stretch and 5:15 BP—but we'd get [on the field] at 4:30 and sit around. A guy came up to me and asked, 'Would you do a radio interview?' So he brings me this huge cellphone. There were always a couple of baseball photographers around; I saw one, and I'm thinking, *Oh, great*. When I saw [the card] I was like, *Come on, really?* Of all the pictures they could have taken—me hitting a line drive or catching the ball.... The kids I coach bring up that card pretty much every year, like I was actually carrying that cellphone around with me on the field. That was the original iPhone right there."





## Eugene Robinson

1991 PRO LINE

Sixteen seasons as a free safety with four teams; three-time Pro Bowler won Super Bowl XXXI with Packers and picked off 57 career passes (13th all time). Now 52, he coaches high school football, wrestling and track in Charlotte.

"This was around when the craze for Zubaz pants started, and Zubaz wanted to get in the trading card game. They wanted to show athletes in their natural environment. So I had my Zubaz pants, my sax—during the shoot I just messed around, maybe played some blues scales—no shoes and, of course, the shirt to show off the abs. That was just me trying to get my sexy on. . . . Don't forget: Zubaz in 1991 was a hot commodity. Now, though, most people don't think those pants are too cool anymore.

When [my students] see the photo they say, *Coach Rob, come on. Look at you, this is kind of corny.* That or, *Look at you, Coach—you actually had hair!*"







### Mickey Hatcher 1986 FLEER

Twelve seasons as a utilityman with the Twins and the Dodgers, with whom he won the '88 World Series. Now 60, he plays golf, takes care of his pet duck and ticks off tasks on his wife's 'honey-do' list in Buena Park, Calif.

"A baseball glove company [Mizuno] happened to be there the same afternoon as photo day. When I walked out, there were giant gloves just sitting on a table. I said, 'If I'm going to have a baseball card, I'm going to need all the help I can get,' and I picked the thing up. It worked out well, so I did one with the Dodgers a few seasons later. Fleer took a lot of other pictures, so I didn't know which one they were going to choose. I was surprised when they [picked that], but it made sense: I couldn't catch with the small glove; I had a better chance with the big one. And I think everyone knew I was a little goofy. That card reflected me as a player well. . . . I never kept the glove. If I had, I would have made a bed out of it for my newborn kid."



### Kurt Rambis 1990 SKYBOX

Fourteen seasons as a power forward, mostly for the Lakers, with whom he won eight titles—four as a player, four as a coach-exec. Now 57, he's an assistant with the Knicks.

"I think people related to the intensity and the work ethic you get out of that photo. These days they beg me not to suit up at [Knicks] practices—I might get suspended for a flagrant foul. . . . I'm losing my hair now; I wish I still had that long hair. And the black glasses: I had LASIK surgery several years ago, but when I was playing and the glasses got knocked off, pretty much everything disappeared."



### Bip Roberts 1996 SCORE

Played 12 seasons, at various positions, with six teams; named an All-Star (44 stolen bases) in '92. Now 51, he's a youth baseball coach and an analyst on Comcast SportsNet Bay Area.

"We had Mexican Heritage Day, and people were performing in costumes before the game. I said to one of the dancers, 'Let me see that sombrero,' and I started doing the salsa. The Padres knew that was just me—I used to dunk a beach ball over the outfield wall. They'd get mad about that, saying, 'He's going to get hurt!' But the fans loved it. I'm really just humbled that such a little thing like a card could bring me so much joy."







# Cheryl Miller

*The greatest women's basketball player left her TV gig to get back into coaching, even after twice burning out on the bench. She took her best offer, at an NAIA school, where she has turned around the program—and rediscovered herself*

**BY JOAN NIESEN**

Photograph by  
Greg Nelson  
For Sports Illustrated

## **FIRM HAND**

Miller took a tough-love approach to team building when she arrived at Langston, and her players—eventually—embraced her methods.

**L**AST JULY, Ronnie Barney took a wrong turn. Out in the forested expanse between Tulsa and Oklahoma City, only water towers and the occasional oversized cross stand out above the tree line. Cows graze along the roadside, and every so often an armadillo lies paws up, a casualty of one of the few cars that traverse these rural routes.

As Barney gained elevation on Highway 33, he could glimpse the school where he'd agreed to work as an assistant women's basketball coach. Langston University's 40 acres are perched on one of the area's highest points, and Barney figured he could navigate there without issue. One turn, then another—and somehow he was on a dirt road. He could still see the campus—until he passed it. When he finally rediscovered pavement and pulled into a parking spot, he'd blown his shock absorbers and his silver Volkswagen Jetta was coated in orange-brown dirt. Everything in his U-Haul was just as grimy.

No one was around—school had yet to start—and doubts filled Barney's mind as he settled into his on-campus apartment. *What am I doing here? I left Louisiana Tech for this?* After a few days of getting settled, he heard a voice outside, one of the first since he'd arrived. It was female. It was loud. It was

the owner of the boxes that had been shipped to the apartment below his.

It was Cheryl Miller, sweating in the humidity, hollering up at her new assistant. When Barney came down to say hello and offered his hand for a shake, Miller hugged him instead. “Those big old arms, they wrapped around me and then they wrapped around her,” Barney says. “Her elbows were around my back. It was a tight squeeze.”

When Miller let go, Barney exhaled. He wasn’t quite sure how either of them had ended up there, but he figured things would shake out just fine.

**O**N APRIL 30, 2014, Langston announced the hiring of Miller as its new women’s basketball coach. It was the biggest news the NAIA program had ever generated, but the players were clueless. Children of the 1990s, the Lady Lions had never seen Miller play; guards T’Keya Mason and Jhordyn Patton hadn’t even heard of her. They knew nothing of the swagger, the close-cropped curls she made trendy in the 1980s, the 105 points she scored in a high school game, the talent and grit that earned her the title she still holds: greatest women’s player of all time. And so, neither student paused to wonder how this superstar had landed with their team, making \$50,000 to coach in a gym with a capacity of 2,200.

In 2012, Miller allowed her broadcasting contract with Turner Sports to expire after 17 years; she wanted back on the bench. (A four-time All-America and two-time national champion at USC, Miller had coached her alma mater in 1993–94 and ’94–95 and the WNBA’s Phoenix Mercury from 1997 to 2000.) For years she’d double-dipped during games, working the sideline while also picking the brains of coaches and inundating scouts with questions about game strategy—all to prepare for this move.

But when Miller began job hunting in the spring of 2013, she made about 20 calls and landed just three interviews, even though she’d gone 42–14 at USC and 70–52 with the Mercury, who made the 1998 WNBA finals. (She resigned from both jobs, citing burn-out in Phoenix.) USC brought Miller in, as did Pepperdine, and she did a Skype session with Santa Clara. None bit. None told her why. “I was shocked,” she says, “but I was O.K. with it. I knew it was going to be difficult.”

Still, as her first full year out of broadcasting came to a close, Miller began to panic. In April 2014, she got a call from Mike Garrett, a former athletic director at USC and a good friend. He asked if she wanted a job. “Where?” she asked. “Langston,” Garrett answered. Pause. “Where’s that, exactly?”

Garrett had been the Lions’ AD since 2012 (he resigned in April to spend more time with his family), and his coach had just quit. If Miller wanted the position, he said, he’d fly her out that week. The visit was a formality. “They didn’t really have to give me a spiel,” Miller says. “I was that hungry. I had truly been humbled.”

Decked out in her school’s black-and-orange gear, her short curls confined by a zebra-print bandana, the 6’ 2” Miller looks younger than her 51 years. A self-proclaimed homebody, she has embraced dinners in the Langston cafeteria, and when she’s hankering for something different, she makes the trip down the hill to the Sonic drive-in in Guthrie. The amenities in her campus apartment are the same as those of the students who live next to her: two bedrooms, basic cable. There’s no DVR to record the games her brother Reggie broadcasts, but a friend recently introduced her to Netflix, which has been a godsend, as has the Subaru Outback that Langston leased for her midyear. Before that, she rode around campus on a bike she calls Betsy, which she still takes for spins almost daily.



*“The best thing about taking this job was to prove to myself that I can live outside of L.A. and be successful out of my comfort zone,” says Miller.*

After her Lady Lions finished 29–4 and won the Red River Athletic Conference tournament for the first time since 2011, Miller became the toast of Langston (pop. 1,800). On campus everyone knows her name, and she at least knows faces. Walking to her office, she stops to chat with a thin student in a sport coat and tie. “Best-dressed man on campus,” she hollers as he walks away, then admits she can’t remember his fraternity. That matters here. She’s still learning. “The best thing about taking this job was—because I’m a creature of habit—to prove to myself that I can live outside of L.A. and be successful out of my comfort zone,” Miller says. “That was the most terrifying aspect: coming somewhere and living truly on my own.”

Miller’s office is spartan. Two nearly empty bookshelves collect dust—the only trophy on display is more than a decade old—and the walls are mostly



bare. On her desk lies a manila envelope with a note from a man named Ronald Miller (no relation). He lives in her hometown of Riverside, Calif., and he saw just one of her high school games, in 1982. Enclosed is the program, and there, on the front, is Miller, grinning as if she owns the world. “I really thought I was cute back in the day,” she chuckles.

In college Miller became the face of her sport. *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* named her the game’s top player—male or female—in 1985, and USC’s women’s games outdrew the men’s. “Everyone wanted a piece of Cheryl Miller,” recalls UNLV coach Kathy Olivier, a former Trojans assistant. “People would wait for us, and they would try to pull at her and



grab her hair like she was a rock star.”

In those days, Miller says, she developed a split personality, part diva, part clown. Worried that her fame would alienate her teammates, she made an effort to connect with the women around her, hiding under hotel beds and grabbing teammates’ ankles once the lights went out.

When she first started coaching, Miller again felt that need to establish camaraderie. She didn’t want to seem aloof with players who were roughly her age, so she let them in—too far in, she realizes now. “I’ve had a tendency to not set healthy boundaries,” Miller says. “I’ve always tried to make people feel comfortable, and they get too comfortable.” Things were no different at Turner Sports; as a woman in a boys’ club, Miller wanted nothing more than to relate, again sacrificing boundaries and twisting her personality in order to feel accepted.

Only now, she says, is she comfortable in her own skin. At Langston she doesn’t have to be the greatest ever. She bristles when the school’s strength-and-conditioning director, Samuel Chatman, describes her as such, and she seems to enjoy that her players, however much Internet research they’ve done, won’t ever fully grasp the extent of her fame.

When Miller arrived on campus, she knew she had to establish a power dynamic, so in high-

## THE MILLER ELITE

A scoring phenom at USC, where she outshone younger brother Reggie, Cheryl embraced the fame that would serve her well in a 17-year TV career.

energy, early-morning practices she routinely kicked players out of her gym. She’s more than happy to point any player needing help in the right direction, but beyond that? “I don’t want you knocking on my door for girl talk.”

The tough-love approach worked: A team that had gone 20–13 in 2013–14 started with 17 straight wins. But when the Lady Lions hit a midseason slump, Miller stormed out of several practices, which Barney felt was sending the wrong signal to the team. “I wanted to chop her throat,” he says. “We needed to stick together.” Miller laughs when she hears that, a fantastic rumble that builds with each *ha-ha-ha*. But Barney, 28, is serious. He didn’t want to criticize his boss but eventually mustered the courage to confront her about her behavior. Miller never left a practice again. She also began to distinguish between criticizing players’ on-court effort and attacking their personalities. Instead of accusing them of not caring, of wasting her time, she began pinpointing the changes they could make to their games.

“A lot of people say the best players don’t make the best coaches,” Reggie says. “In this case, they’re wrong. Not only does she care about the best player on her team; she’s just as passionate about the 12th woman.”

Mason, a junior, describes Miller’s practices as “fun and intense,” heavy on running, but you’d better not complain. “She makes me work,” says Sharron Carter, a 5’9” senior point guard who has lost 32 pounds since last fall at Miller’s directive. “She gets me out of my comfort zone.”

**L**ANGSTON’S LOSS in the second round of the NAIA tournament haunts Miller, and since she has no desire to look back, she’s giving the net from the conference championship game and its accompanying plaque to university president Kent Smith. No one’s ever presented him with a net before, he tells her; even now, a year into Miller’s tenure, he’s still a little awestruck that she’s even here, in his wood-paneled conference room, which looks as if it hasn’t been redecorated since the 1980s. He thanks her for bringing the memorabilia. “No, thank *you*,” she tells him sincerely before bounding out the door.

Smith is a basketball fan who attends most of Langston’s games, and he’s proud to report that the school may start charging for entry next year, so huge is the demand to see Miller in action. Still, he knows what he has is fleeting. His coach may love her job. She may tolerate Oklahoma. But this isn’t her endgame, not by a long shot. “I love the fact that I’ve had this opportunity, but I want more,” Miller says. “I want bigger. I want better.”

Last winter Miller hired an agent, Felicia Hall Allen, but jobs are still elusive. Miller figures she’ll have to win a national championship if she wants to move up. That’s less a fact than a challenge, and she will spend another year here, riding Betsy to and from her little apartment, consuming Sonic and Netflix and cafeteria cuisine. But even so, her mind wanders miles from this barren office to a million different places, because for Miller, a tiny school in Oklahoma has opened up her world. □







# MLS Pioneers

*A 10-team organization with zero soccer-specific stadiums at the start, Major League Soccer now has 20 franchises, 13 of them playing in homes of their own, with payrolls that have tripled. As the league plays its 20th season, key figures recall the kickoff campaign*

**BY ALEXANDER ABNOS**

With reporting  
by Grant Wahl and  
Brian Straus

Photograph by  
**George Tiedemann**  
For Sports Illustrated

## OPENING QUESTIONS

D.C. United keeper Jeff Causey made a save in San Jose during the first MLS game, at which everyone in the league wondered—and worried—that a scoreless draw might spell doom.

**T**

**HE CAVEAT** that came with the awarding of the 1994 World Cup seems quaint compared with recent allegations against FIFA: The U.S., a country that had tried and failed several times to support pro soccer, would have to start a first-division league of its own.

**ALAN ROTHENBERG** (U.S. Soccer Federation president, 1990 to '98; director, World Cup '94): I never had any intention of creating a pro league. I assumed if we had a successful World Cup and the excitement was clear, some entrepreneurs would say, "Time to have a pro league again." But no one was stepping forward. Then, at the time of the World Cup draw, in December 1993, FIFA told us, "You really gotta get going."

**JONATHAN KRAFT** (New England Revolution co-owner): None of [the Kraft family] really knew the sport; we weren't comfortable committing in the lead-up to the World Cup. But once we saw it in person, at a high level, we really took to the pageantry. This was the traditional U.S. sport on steroids.

**CLARK HUNT** (son of Columbus Crew and Dallas Burn owner Lamar Hunt): One of the first people Rothenberg called was my father. He'd been a great believer in this sport going back to the 1960s, and he was eager to jump back in—despite his business advisers' recommending he not.

**ROTHENBERG:** We hired the consultants who had done the economic consulting for NFL stadiums. We got them to show it was feasible to own a soccer-specific stadium in the 20,000-to-30,000-seat range.

**CHARLIE STILLITANO** (New York/New Jersey MetroStars vice president, 1994 to '99): Sunil [Gulati, then executive vice president and chief international officer for World Cup '94] and Rothenberg were bringing in all these investors, doing this dog-and-pony show, saying, "You can build a little stadium for \$30 million."

**HUNT:** The original prospectus envisioned soccer-specific stadiums. It was the right idea, but the timing was wrong. Also, the dollar amount was wrong by a factor of 20.

**KRAFT:** Alan realized we weren't going to get 10 or 12 of those [stadiums] done up front, but he wanted to get the league off the ground.

**MARLA MESSING** (MLS senior vice president, 1994 to '97): Soccer-specific stadiums and single-entity [ownership of the league]—everything spun out from those two things.

**ROTHENBERG:** In pro wrestling, the league owns everything, and they sign up the wrestlers. But as far as a more traditional league, no [single-entity] had been done. The idea had been rattling around in my head since the 1970s, when I was a young lawyer for the NBA. Boy, it would've been smart if [the NBA] was originally structured as a single entity.

**HUNT:** The league was trying desperately to round up a group of owners. Other than Stuart Subotnick and John Kluge [who would own the MetroStars], the Krafts and my dad, they were really having a hard time getting others to commit.

**IVAN GAZIDIS** (MLS deputy commissioner, 1994 to 2009): The guy who had not yet committed, but if he committed everyone was in, was [entrepreneur] Phil Anschutz. Phil dialed into a conference call from an airplane and said he was in, but he wanted that guy who did the bicycle kick at the World Cup for his team in Colorado. So we had to get [U.S. defender] Marcelo Balboa. It was an incredible negotiation because Marcelo was doing great playing in Mexico. But I don't think Marcelo fully realized the leverage he had. The whole league depended on that signing.

**STEVE SAMPSON** (U.S. national team coach, 1995 to '98): It took Anschutz owning half the teams in the league in order to get MLS started. Where else in the world does that happen?

*The league did sign Balboa, and Anschutz committed to owning five of the 10 teams in 1996. With ownership essentially set, and teams playing mainly in football stadiums, the league began to determine what it would present on the field.*

**GULATI:** We had a number of think-tank meetings to talk about what we could do to make the game more interesting.

**GAZIDIS:** Some of the ideas sounded crazy, but it wasn't clear at that time whether there was enough of a core audience that loved soccer the way it was. I found the debate not a stupid one.

**DOUG LOGAN** (MLS commissioner, 1996 to '99): Everyone thinks we were the crazy Americans and FIFA was restraining us, but nothing can be further from the truth. FIFA thought this would be a great laboratory. If the experiments worked, wonderful—and if they didn't, they could blame it on us.

**BRUCE ARENA** (D.C. United coach, 1996 to '98): We were told that [MLS was] going to tell the linesmen not to call offside if a call was close. I remember asking, "What the hell did we get ourselves into?"

**LOGAN:** They had another proposal to make throw-ins *kick-ins*.

**MESSING:** I remember a meeting between Alan and [then FIFA general secretary] Sepp Blatter. Alan did his whole song and dance about bigger goals, which would lead to more scoring. And Blatter just looked at him like,

Everyone across the world would have to buy new goals; do you realize what you are contemplating? He was just shaking his head.

**KEVIN PAYNE** (D.C. United president, 1994 to 2001, '04 to '12): I had a fundamentally different belief about why the league was going to work. I believed people wanted something that looked like what they saw in Europe or South America and from watching the World Cup. They didn't want some kind of crazy, Americanized version of it.

**KRAFT:** In retrospect, bigger goals would have been a huge mistake. [But] that's what happens when



## AFTER A FASHION

The uniforms were a garish reflection of counterculture aspirations; Valderrama (right, in blue) starred for a Tampa team that was a misnomer.

you have a bunch of people thinking about a sport, trying to introduce it to a country that at the time hadn't fully embraced it.

**GAZIDIS:** The issue wasn't really throwing stuff at a wall and seeing what stuck. It was, What is our potential audience? How far do we have to lean in to the American audience? In the end we came to a reasonable place, which was basically the tradi-

tional game with a couple of tweaks, including the shootout and the countdown clock.

*But even those two rule changes were seen by many as radical departures: Instead of the time being kept on the field by the officials, each half ended with a buzzer; instead of counting up to 90 minutes, the clock counted down to zero. And there would be no ties; shootouts started from 35 yards out and players had five seconds to try to score.*

**LOGAN:** FIFA was truly intrigued by the shootout. **ERIC WYNALDA** (San Jose Clash forward, 1996 to '99): I hated it. You had the rest of the world





*"Some of the ideas sounded crazy," says Gazidis, "but it wasn't clear at that time whether there was enough of a core audience that loved soccer the way it was."*

going. What the hell are they doing? All of my friends in Germany would just laugh at us.

**BRAD FRIEDEL** (Crew goalkeeper, 1996 to '99): In one of my first games we drew 1-1, so I walked off the pitch and into the locker room. The equipment manager said, "What are you doing? You have a shootout; nobody told you?" I did know; I had just completely forgotten. I had to put my shirt back on.

**WYNALDA**: I actually got hurt! That was the injury that really knocked my career off the rails, when I ran into [Kansas City Wiz goalkeeper] Garth Lagerwey during the shootout.

**FRIEDEL**: I hated the countdown clock, too. Time should be kept by officials. It was very easy when you were winning by a goal to run the clock down.

**GAZIDIS**: Twenty years later a lot of things have changed, including the sophistication of the U.S. soccer audience. [Both innovations were abandoned after the '99 season.] When you talk about the ideas that were considered, they sound much wackier now than I think they were at the time. *The same can't be said for most of the initial logos, jerseys and team names.*

**LOGAN**: I told MLS before they hired me that they'd made two immense mistakes: putting teams in Florida [Miami and Tampa Bay] and the preposterous arrogance of putting *major* in their name. How can you start something by saying you're major? Let somebody else come to that conclusion down the line. All of a sudden you've gotta live up to Major League Baseball.

**MESSING**: We did this [multimedia] show called MLS Unveiled, where we paraded out the uniforms. We had music and models, and we couldn't have been more excited. Then we got hammered by everyone.

**PAYNE**: Some of the worst uniforms in the history of sports.

**HUNT**: The league, in its infinite wisdom, allowed the apparel companies to have beyond-significant input in the naming and the branding of the teams.

**RANDY BERNSTEIN** (MLS chief marketing officer, 1995 to '99): Our senior executive team decided that there are no smarter, better people when it comes to branding and licensing and understanding the idiosyncrasies of certain markets—so we had Nike, Adidas and Reebok doing this.

**PAYNE**: They wanted looks that were reflective of skateboard culture. They were very taken with the idea that this was a counterculture sport, whereas my feeling was exactly the opposite—this was the most traditional of sports. People in the U.S. liked what they saw overseas.

**ALEXI LALAS** (Revolution defender, 1996 and '97): If you didn't come from a soccer culture and you were asked to brand a new sports team in the mid-'90s, of course you were going to go crazy. And they did.

**PAYNE**: I told them, "I don't get this [Tampa Bay] *Mutiny*. What's with the symbol?" They said, "Oh, it's a mutant bat." "O.K., what does that have to do with *Mutiny*?" "You know—*Mutiny*, mutant." I said, "Those are two different words with completely different meanings. They just share some letters. What are you doing?"

**THOMAS RONGEN** (Mutiny coach, 1996):

What the f---? A mutant bat? What are we representing? Nike must have had a few guys smoking dope, coming up with the craziest things.

**STEVE RALSTON** (Mutiny midfielder, 1996 to 2001): The jersey material wasn't wicking away sweat. It was more like you were in a sweatsuit.

**WYNALDA**: Nike tried too hard. That away jersey from the Clash is just. . . Someone threw up on a shirt.

**PAYNE**: One of the three principal colors for the Clash was "celery." Who gets emotional about celery?

**HUNT**: Beyond D.C. United, which was a very traditional soccer name, the rest of us were really scratching our heads.

*The next trick: finding players to wear those uniforms. When team names were unveiled in October 1995, MLS had signed only 53 of its eventual 180 players.*

**J. TODD DURBIN** (MLS director of player personnel, 1996 to '98): Sunil was primarily in charge of signing all the big, high-profile players—the [Marco] Etcheverry, the [Carlos] Valderramas, the [Roberto] Donadonis.

**GULATI**: I went to four countries in one day and had meetings in all four. I had a morning meeting in Germany with Andy Brehme, who scored the winning goal for Germany in the 1990 World Cup. Then a meeting at the Milan airport with Donadoni. I flew from Milan to London, where I met with Bobby Houghton at Heathrow because Colorado was thinking about hiring him as the coach. Then I flew to New York, where I had dinner with [Rothenberg and Logan].

**MESSING**: We were trying to sign [goalkeeper] Jorge Campos, who was a huge star. Mexico was playing in San Diego, and we could not get to him.

**ROTHENBERG:** We met with him as surreptitiously as we could. We snuck off in the back hall in the stadium. It felt like we were doing a drug deal.

**MESSING:** The Mexican team comes out, and Sunil grabs Campos. He says, "I need to talk to you about MLS." We literally stopped him on his way to go play this game.

**GULATI:** It was semi-well-planned chaos. We would put up on a grease board what a team might look like, and that would include a couple of players from the U.S. national team, a couple of foreign players, their compensation and how it would add up to whatever the cap was in year one [\$1.2 million].

**ROTHENBERG:** We wanted to place players in the appropriate place. So Campos—I don't think we would have been smart to send him to Columbus. So we brought him to L.A.

**RONGEN:** I knew there would be a Latin player designated for Tampa because we were the southernmost team. We weren't the first choice for [Colombia's] Valderrama, but we convinced Sunil this would be a good situation for us.

**LALAS:** I was one of the lucky guys who was able to say, "This is where I would like to go." I had this romantic view of Boston based on trips I had taken with the national team, where we would go out, and I just had so much fun. So I based my selection on the bars of the city.

**ANDREW SHUE** (L.A. Galaxy forward, 1996 and '97; *Melrose Place* actor, 1992 to '98): Mine was a player-marketing deal. I was a spokesperson for the World Cup and had gotten to know people like [MLS senior vice president of business affairs] Mark Abbott and Alan Rothenberg; I made it clear I wanted to play in MLS.

**DURBIN:** I faxed a contract to Andrew's house; three days later it was signed and mailed back to me. I open it up, and I'm looking at it, and I can't figure out what it is. I'm reading, **BILL:** WHAT ARE YOU DOING TONIGHT? **ALISON:** I'M NOT SURE. Why am I reading the script for *Melrose Place*? Then I turn it over, and on the other side is the contract. Apparently Andrew ran out of paper.

**SHUE:** I didn't actually tell anybody [at *Melrose Place*]. I didn't have an official conversation with [producer] Aaron Spelling: "Oh, by the way, I'm trying out for the Galaxy." They just kind of found out about it when there was something in the paper. They were a bit concerned. I came in limping one day and they realized, Wow, you could actually get hurt. What happens if you get a black eye? I told them, "We'd write it into the script."

**DURBIN:** Then there was a whole group of players that no one knew whether they were even going to make the team—the players at the bottom of the pay scale. We had a lot of all-nighters, working like crazy to get all these players signed and into the inaugural combine.

*The MLS combine was the first time that many of the league's coaches had a chance to scout the players; based largely on those performances, MLS held its debut draft. The No. 1 pick, in a prearranged move between Hunt's Crew and the league, was St. Louis All-America striker Brian McBride. But then things got fuzzy.*

**CHRIS ARMAS** (Galaxy midfielder, 1996 and '97): There were tons of players at the combine. I just wanted to play. Just show yourself and hope someone saw something he likes.

**LOGAN:** Teams could only get about three players [into the draft], and then nobody knew who these players were.

**DURBIN:** Said Fazlagić [who showed up uninvited] was eventually drafted by D.C. United [in the 11th round], and he actually played in the first MLS game. Here was a Bosnian refugee who showed up at the combine with a pair of boots and some photocopies of newspaper articles.

**ARENA:** The players we had obviously were not of the quality they needed to be. After four or five weeks I got rid of six or seven players and brought in guys I knew.

## GALACTICO

It took some backdoor maneuvering to bring Mexico's Campos to his desired destination—L.A.—where he helped attract a new generation of fans.



*The roster changes continued, even as the league finally started playing in earnest.*

**MESSING:** I was in charge of the opening game in San Jose [between the Clash and D.C. United]. That was a very big deal. We made this greeting card where you open it up and the thing says [in a recorded voice], *Olé, olé, olé, olé...* Those are common now, but in 1996 they were superexpensive, and some people thought we were crazy. It really did get people excited, that silly invitation.

**PHIL SCHOEN** (MLS play-by-play announcer for ESPN, 1996 to 2000): The light poles at Spartan Stadium were situated between the stands and the field, and when the cameras panned you had this glare of silver coming back at you. We made them paint every single light green so it wouldn't interfere with the cameras, and that was the day before the opener. About three hours before kickoff they were still putting in plants and flowers. It seemed everything was going at light speed but in slow motion.

**WYNALDA:** I remember the bus ride over, how nervous my teammates were. Some of these guys had never been on TV before.

**ARENA:** That remains one of the worst games ever played in MLS.





*"Said Fazlagi played in the first game," Durbin says. "Here was a Bosnian refugee who showed up at the combine with a pair of boots and copies of newspaper articles."*

**SCHOEN:** A lot of the MLS people were in the booth next to us, and you could see them crossing their fingers and biting their nails at the same time. It wasn't a very pretty match.

**GAZIDIS:** We were hoping for a great game—instead there's no goal. Our worst nightmare: a scoreless tie and heading toward a shootout. I'm bursting for the loo. I run inside to go. . . .

**BOB BRADLEY (D.C. United assistant coach, 1996 and '97):** And then Eric [Wynalda] scores a very good goal, and everyone is happy. That's as ironic as it gets.

**GAZIDIS:** I'd been working on MLS for 18 months, waiting for this game. I'm in the urinal and there's a massive cheer from outside, and I realize somebody had scored. I ran outside and somebody threw their beer on me.

**SCHOEN:** With the guillotine hanging over our head, to see that buildup and to get it to Wynalda out on the left flank. . . . He fakes one way, cuts back to the other. . . .

**GULATI:** If I remember correctly, nutmegging Jeff Agoos.

**JEFF AGOOS (D.C. United defender, 1996 to 2000):** I sort of saved the league from going under in the first year. A 0–0 tie in the first game wouldn't fly, so we had to do something.

**SCHOEN:** For as forgettable a game as it might have been, that goal was absolutely amazing.

**WYNALDA:** I was trying to pass it into the corner and keep it low, but I got under it. If I had aimed for where the ball ended up, I would've skied it.

**SCHOEN:** There have been better goals scored

in Major League Soccer, but I don't know if there's been a bigger goal. If you were a soccer fan in this nation, you just exploded.

**ROTHENBERG:** I never loved Eric Wynalda more. On the national team he was not the easiest guy to deal with. But I loved him when he got that first goal.

**ARENA:** I think that [fear of a 0–0 draw] stems from a lack of maturity and understanding of the sport. In 2007, with the Red Bulls, we won a match 5–4, and the game was terrible. To this day, league officials and club owners still get concerned by 0–0 games. But that's life.

*While the league's inaugural match provided a flash of on-field skill, the Galaxy's home opener against the MetroStars gave a glimpse of soccer's potential popularity.*

**COBI JONES (Galaxy midfielder, 1996 to 2007):** We were told that we'd get like 15,000 to 20,000 people. I remember getting off the bus, and we were like, What's all the traffic? What's going on here?

**SHUE:** They delayed the game almost an hour because the walk-up crowd had been so big.

**DURBIN:** They were announcing each player as he ran out. "Starting center back Dan Calichman," and there was a smattering of applause. "Robin Fraser," a bit

of applause. Then they announce "Jorge Campos," and the place just erupts.

**DURBIN:** Afterward Jorge says, "What'd you guys think about the game?" He didn't say it literally, but the basic message was: There were 69,000 people in the stadium and only 2,000 of them knew my teammates; the other 67,000 knew me. If you'd like me to return, I would like to have a Ferrari. [The team did buy him one that year.]

**LALAS:** It was very Wild West. We were just trying to figure it out as we went along. The new generation of American player, they don't have any understanding of what it was like back then, and I don't want them to.

**WYNALDA:** Most of those guys were making nothing! I remember going to Taco Bell after practice with [midfielder] Eddie Lewis, and he kind of looked at me like, "You're paying, right?" Every dollar counted.

**LALAS:** We didn't know whether the league was even going to survive. We didn't have training facilities. We were playing in football stadiums.

**ARENA:** We had a crown field in Tampa, where standing on one touchline and looking at the other side, you could only see a guy from his knees up.

**LAGERWEY:** In Kansas City the concept of a locker room did not exist in the sense of a private space for the team. Alan Mayer was my goalkeeper coach, and he was part-time. He'd sell insurance and train us when he could.

**STILLITANO:** I had to argue for an equipment manager. MLS wanted a brief on what the guy does. *What he does?* He does laundry. They said the team should do their own laundry. We have guys like Tab Ramos, Roberto Donadoni, Perter Vermes, Tony Meola, and I'm gonna ask them to do their own laundry?

**DAVE DIR (Burn coach, 1996 to 2000):** The first year we rented a high school field, and we had two trailers from the trailer park that we were using as a locker room. But by the time we finished, we moved up to a double-wide.

**EDDIE POPE (D.C. United defender, 1996 to 2002):** I was missing practices, flying back and forth, going to school [at North Carolina] to finish—or at least chip away at—my degree. It was important to me, and it wasn't like today. You couldn't take online classes. I'd come to D.C. on a Thursday or Friday and fly back out [to Chapel Hill] after the game.

**LALAS:** I put a band together in Boston and released an album a couple of

years later. I was playing and doing all that stuff. I would do shows on a weeknight or after a game. That really wouldn't fly today.

**GAZIDIS:** [Burn defender] Leonel Álvarez would refuse to go on the pitch unless we gave him an envelope of cash—that's the way things happened in Colombia. It took him a couple of months to believe that payments went into his bank account.

**MCBRIDE:** Doctor Khumalo was a great person, but he must have had allergies; he played 10 games with a handkerchief in his left hand. He's running around, blowing his nose in his handkerchief and then puts it back. It blew me away.

**PETER VERMES** (MetroStars defender, 1996): We were doing a walk-through [in practice], and at this time cellphones were starting to become common.

**TAB RAMOS** (MetroStars midfielder, 1996 to 2002): The coach asked [defender Nicola Caricola] to be in the wall for a free kick exercise. He didn't want to be in the wall; he had some phone calls to make.

**VERMES:** We're like, Nicko! And he's all like, 'Scusi!' He's on the phone to someone in Italy.

**RAMOS:** When you are in the wall, you are supposed to cover yourself. So he's covering himself with one hand, but he's got the cellphone in his other. Unbelievable.

**LAGERWEY:** After home wins I'd crowd surf. We won one game, I went behind the goal and a fan handed me a beer and I drank the whole thing. That's what we did back then. There were no fitness coaches. No nutrition coaches. We were winging it.

**WYNALDA:** After that first game there was this older gentleman—he was really drunk, and there wasn't a lot of security. As I was walking off the field, he gave me the greatest compliment anyone has ever given me. He said I reminded him of the old days, of George Best. I said, "You're coming with me." I brought him into the locker room, and I gave him a beer. [Coach Lawrie] Callaway walks into the room, and I hear this voice screaming, "You were a bum as a player, and you're a bum now, Callaway!" I look over and there's the guy sitting in my locker, yelling at my coach. I said, "All right, you've gotta go." I was like, "I'm sorry, he seemed like a nice guy."

**RAMOS:** They're all good memories. Back then they weren't. Those are just the normal steps of any professional league, which inevitably is not professional to start, because it can't help itself.

*After 160 games and the playoffs, the moment had arrived: the first MLS Cup, between D.C. United and the Galaxy in Foxborough, Mass.*

**PAYNE:** There was a full nor'easter. The day before the game I was sitting in the restaurant of my hotel looking out at the harbor, and there was a huge



#### SODDEN IMPACT

After a season that drew average crowds of 17,406, Jones (13) led L.A. to the first MLS Cup against Clint Peay and D.C., a wet and wild match that went into overtime.

ocean-going freighter trying to come in. They had multiple tugs on it, and the wind was blowing so hard that they couldn't get to the dock. They tried for an hour and finally the boat just kind of turned around and pulled out.

**POPE:** We were getting reports that they didn't know if we were going to be able to play, then we'd get another report that we were going to.

**PAYNE:** They put tarps down overnight, but there was so much water on them that the crew almost couldn't get them up. They ended up dumping most of the water right in front of one of the goals; there was no way to control it.

**BRADLEY:** Guys come in from the warmup and they're soaking wet. They're already changing socks.

**JONES:** The ball was getting stuck all over the place. It was difficult to see because of the rain. You'd open your eyes and water is going in. I can clearly recall Chris Armas's great goal, his little dance through the middle.

**ARMAS:** It was almost ours. It's a credit to D.C. They clawed their way back in. We were up 2-0 and seemingly had the game.

**AGOOS:** Tony Sanneh and Shawn Medved scored—that got us to overtime.

**ARMAS:** Then it just slips right out from under us.

**LOGAN:** Regulation ends in a tie, it goes to overtime and there's a corner awarded to D.C. Marco [Etcheverry] places the ball in the water and delivers a cross—a perfectly placed kick in the pouring rain out of a puddle—to Eddie Pope's forehead.

**POPE:** It was really hard to miss. That's why I headed it so hard.

**LOGAN:** I go into the D.C. dressing room and I'm talking to Marco in Spanish. I said, "What you did was remarkable." And he says, "I had a coach who, at the end of practice every day, used to make us get buckets of water. He used to make us practice kicking balls out of puddles because, he said, someday you're going to win a championship if you can kick a ball out of that."

**PAYNE:** There was a general sense that we all witnessed something very special. That was one of the greatest championship games I'd ever seen, in any sport.

**KRAFT:** There were 36,000 people [at MLS Cup '96] in what was effectively worse than a blizzard. Out of this, all of us took away that there was an appetite for this game in this country.

**LALAS:** There aren't many things you can say you were there for from the start. Through all the stories and the craziness of it, there is a pride, I think, for everybody who was involved from the beginning. □



ENTER THE CODE  
PUT SOME BACKSPIN ON IT



**SWEAT**  
WITH THE BEST



**YOU COULD WIN AN  
EPIC ATHLETIC EXPERIENCE**

ENTER YOUR ACCESS CODE FROM SPECIALLY MARKED BOTTLES AT [SWEATWITHTHEBEST.COM](http://SWEATWITHTHEBEST.COM)

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. A PURCHASE WILL NOT INCREASE YOUR CHANCE OF WINNING. Open only to residents of the US, including Guam, Puerto Rico, and US Virgin Islands, 13+. 50 Random Drawing Prizes: Sports-related experience. AAV of Random Drawing Prizes: \$2,000-9,000. Ends 11:59 p.m. ET on 3/31/16. Limit 5 plays per person/email address per day. For free code, send a 3"x5" card with your complete name, address & email address for receipt by 3/24/16 to: Gatorade Free Code, P.O. Box 760017, Dept. 838-703, El Paso, TX 88576-0017. Code will be emailed. Limit 1 request per envelope. Multiple drawing dates/entry deadlines apply for Random Drawing Prizes. See Official Rules at [www.sweatwiththebest.com](http://www.sweatwiththebest.com) for drawing schedule & complete details. Void where prohibited. Sponsor: The Gatorade Company, 555 W. Monroe St., Chicago, IL 60661. ©2015 S-VC, Inc. GATORADE and the G BOLT Design are registered trademarks of S-VC, Inc.



# The Stray

## Of Sochi

*Escaping severe treatment on the streets they called home at last year's Winter Games, a small faction of Russia's many lost dogs have found loving homes Stateside, bringing Olympic joy—medal or no medal—to their new owners*

**BY MARK BEECH**

Photograph by  
Nathaniel Brooks  
For Sports Illustrated

### ROOM AND BOARD

After crashing out in Russia, Jacobellis fell for a stray and came home with a new housemate.

T

he weather is nice, he spends most of his time wandering the Jacobellis' 2½ acres, chewing on sticks, digging holes or running happy laps within the perimeter of the electric fence. Otherwise, he'll stay inside and gnaw on a chew toy or search for sunny places to nap, often alongside the family's other dogs, an 11-year-old German shepherd named Bear and Gidget, a 9-year-old Yorkie.

Altogether, it's a long way from where Sochi was 16 months ago, when Lindsey met him at her hotel in Rosa Khutor, the Russian resort town in the Caucasus Mountains that hosted Alpine events for the 2014 Winter Olympics. Back then Sochi—a mix of borzoi, Dalmatian, German shepherd, German shorthaired pointer, Tibetan terrier and white Swiss shepherd, according to the results of a DNA test—was just trying to survive. The 3-month-old stray was malnourished and had an eye infection; he sustained himself by begging for food while staying clear of hotel security. Jacobellis's first encounter with the mutt came when he hitched a ride atop her equipment bag as she was

**THESE ARE** good days for Sochi Jacobellis. A typical morning for the wiry-haired mongrel with the deferential demeanor and big, floppy ears begins early, when he wakes and races downstairs to the back door of the house that his owner, 29-year-old Olympic snowboarder Lindsey Jacobellis, shares with her parents near Stratton, Vt. Sochi's first order of business is a quick romp in the yard, after which he returns inside and wolfs down breakfast. From then on the day is pretty much his until suppertime. When



S



wheeling it into the hotel lobby. “I started bringing him treats,” she says. Within a few days she had U.S. Snowboarding chefs preparing bowls of table scraps for him. Not long after, she began looking into how to bring the puppy, whom she would name for the Olympics’ host city, back to Vermont.

Besides Jacobellis, three other U.S. athletes—hockey players David Backes and Kelli Stack and slopestyle skier Gus Kenworthy—each brought at least one stray dog home from Sochi. The Games were intended to be a \$50 billion showcase for Vladimir Putin, but some best remember them for the host city’s canines, whose furry faces were a happy contrast to the Russian president’s perpetual scowl. “You saw your first stray at the airport,” remembers Backes. “They were everywhere.”

It wasn’t just the ubiquity of those strays that turned them into social-media sensations—it was the Russian government’s hiring of an exterminator, who called them “biological trash” and cited the danger of a ski jumper landing on one. Hundreds of dogs were killed in the weeks before the Games. Jacobellis saw a security guard at her hotel kick Sochi. Stack and her teammates watched a friendly pooch they had been petting moments before get scooped up by two men who drove away in a white van. “That shook everybody up,” she says.

Some athletes couldn’t just, in the words of Backes, “give them a last meal, say a prayer and hope for the best.” And so a few took action. For Jacobellis, who disappointingly failed to match the snowboard cross silver she won at Turin in 2006, bringing Sochi home from the Games was more meaningful than returning with a medal. “My event didn’t pan out the way I would have liked,” she says, “but it was nice to get something great out of it.”

**STRAY DOGS** have a rich history in Russia. Literary references to Moscow’s mongrels date back to the 19th century, and St. Petersburg’s Stray Dog Café was a popular hangout for cast-aside novelists and poets in the early part of the 20th. The first living creature to orbit the Earth, in fact, was a 3-year-old female Moscow stray named Laika, who was shot into space aboard Sputnik 2 on Nov. 3, 1957. Today, an estimated 35,000 mutts roam Moscow alone; a group of so-called “metro dogs” are even sophisticated enough to have become regular users of the subway system. The practice of spaying and neutering is almost nonexistent in Russia—according to the Humane Society International, most vets don’t even offer the service. “The strays serve an important sanitary function in our cities,” says Andrei Neuronov, a Russian specialist in animal behavior and psychology who has worked with Putin’s own female black Labrador retriever, Connie. “We would not be able to manage the rat population without them.”

Moscow’s population is about 12 million; Sochi’s is around 365,000. According to Neuronov, there are no statistics on the number of stray dogs in that city (one estimate puts it at 4,000), but theories about where they come from focus on the construction of venues for the most expensive Olympic Games in history. Some belonged to families displaced by construction, a number that Human Rights Watch has estimated to be about 2,000; others were owned (or fed) by the tens of thousands of construction workers who

made the area their temporary home. When those workers departed, the thinking goes, they left their dogs behind.

Sochi’s domesticated strays, who to visitors seemed friendly and approachable, became famous when the sporting world descended on the Black Sea resort town in February 2014. They blew up on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and on countless photo galleries; footage of one dog went viral after he wandered onto a cross-country ski course during a training run and began barking at competitors.

In a country whose people have a reputation for inscrutability, and where smiling at passing strangers is a cultural taboo, Sochi’s sociable mutts provided a window into the hearts of everyday Russians. “The behavior of strays has 100% to do with their human interaction,” says Humane Society International’s Kelly O’Meara.



*Stack watched as a friendly pooch she had been petting got scooped up by two men who drove away in a white van. “That shook everybody up,” she says.*

“We found out that many of the locals in Sochi were taking care of these dogs.”

The international outcry over the culling of stray dogs was immediate, and as the Games began, two hastily constructed shelters popped up near Sochi. One, PovoDog, was funded by Russian billionaire Oleg Deripaska, who’d financed development of much of the area in advance of the Olympics. The other, Sochi Dogs, was founded in Morristown, N.J., on the eve of the Games by the mother-daughter team of Tanya and Anna Umansky. They had read about Vlada Provotorova, a Sochi dentist who was trying to save the city’s strays in her spare time. Tanya,



who immigrated with her family to the U.S. from Moscow in 1993, contacted Provotorova while Anna, a New York City marketing associate, set up a crowd-funding hub at Indiegogo. Today, Sochi Dogs can accommodate roughly 50 strays and has found homes for more than 40 dogs. PovoDog can house up to 300. “Eradication never



Games, so his friend Robin MacDonald stuck around for nearly a month to complete the adoption of five mutts—a mother and her four puppies—that he’d bonded with near the Olympic media center. Backes, who runs a non-profit animal-welfare organization called Athletes for Animals with his wife, Kelly, brought two mongrels back to St. Louis in his carry-on luggage—Kelly had completed all the paperwork while David was competing. The Backeses already cared for two cats and four dogs, all rescued from U.S. shelters, so,

after clearing quarantine, their dogs went to homes in New York: Sochi Jr. lives in Westchester County with the parents of Backes’s Blues teammate Kevin Shattenkirk; Jake is in Manhattan with Rangers center Derek Stepan (like Shattenkirk, a fellow U.S. Olympian) and his wife, Stephanie.

All these athletes have heard the criticism that instead of adopting strays from Sochi, they should have rescued dogs in the U.S. But the opprobrium doesn’t account for the circumstances. Rescuing the dogs, says O’Meara, was “a very natural human reaction to a very terrible situation.”

“I saw these dogs every day, and I knew what was happening to them,” says Kenworthy. “I didn’t want that to happen to dogs that I had fallen in love with.”

**THE HOST** of the next Winter Olympics, in 2018, is already squarely on the radar of animal-welfare advocates. South Korea does not have a problem with strays, but it is the only country in the world where dogs are raised for food. “It’s a dying practice,” says O’Meara, who adds that the conditions at such farms are horrific. “But we know there are still an estimated two million dogs consumed a year.”

According to O’Meara, the South Korean government does not want to acknowledge the problem, nor has it been receptive to the Humane Society’s offers to help farmers trans-

sition from harvesting dogs to raising crops. In that way, the situation closely resembles what happened in Sochi, where the Humane Society got no response from the Russian government after offering free spaying and neutering services.

For Sochi Jacobellis, who splits his time between Stratton and the Jacobellis’ other house, in Roxbury, Conn., the days of privation and neglect are a distant memory, if they’re a memory at all. Lindsey notes that he’s not abnormally obsessed with food—he doesn’t snap at those who come close to his dog bowl—and he has long since overcome his aversion to tall men in suits, a remnant, presumably, of his run-ins with hotel security in Rosa Khutor. These days his biggest concern is the next visit from the UPS man, who always brings treats.

“I wasn’t really looking to adopt a dog,” says Jacobellis, “but Sochi significantly impacted my three weeks over there. I felt like I had to repay that kindness in some way.” □

## MUTT HOUSE

Stepan (far left) joined the lovefest in Sochi and, along with Jacobellis and Kenworthy (near left), picked up where previous dog lovers had left off.



works,” says O’Meara. “They’re going the shelter route [in Sochi] now, but we believe that mass spaying and neutering is the key to controlling the population of these dogs.”

During the Games the two shelters were critical in helping athletes bring their adopted dogs home. Stack, who won a silver medal, adopted Shayba (named for an Olympic hockey venue, itself the Russian word for *puck*), a 45-pound German shepherd mix, through Sochi Dogs. But most athletes got outside help. Jacobellis relied on the staff at her hotel to get Sochi’s paperwork in order. Kenworthy, who also won silver, had to return to the U.S. for a media tour after the









# Don King

*The octogenarian who promoted and personified a glorious era in boxing—the heyday of the heavyweights—is as recognizable and bombastic as ever. It's just that fewer people are looking or listening, and that's not necessarily a good thing*

**BY CHRIS MANNIX**

Photograph by  
Kevin Liles  
For Sports Illustrated

## **BANNER DAY**

King used two fistfuls of flags to try to rev up enthusiasm for a recent fight involving one of the few fighters he still manages (not the headliner).

**I**NSIDE THE Birmingham City Hall, past the security desk, up three floors on the elevator, down a winding hallway and behind the door of a vacant conference room, Don King is slouching in a leather chair, half a dozen of his staffers seated around him. It's 60°, a chill meant to combat the sweltering 90°-plus heat outside. Most of King's team is dressed for the swelter; T-shirts, shorts, skirts. Not King. Rain or shine, hot or cold, his public attire rarely changes: shopworn denim jacket covered in pins and patches, dark slacks, powder blue shirt with a tie striped like the American flag. King-wear is ever so predictable.

King is in Birmingham to promote a heavyweight title fight, but then isn't that predictable too? For decades King was a driving force behind Muhammad Ali and George Foreman. He was the electric-haired, dynamite-voiced impresario introducing Larry Holmes and Mike Tyson. He gave boxing the Rumble in the Jungle and the Thrilla in Manila, spearheaded a heavyweight reunification series in the 1980s and milked every dollar out of a Tyson-worshipping public in the '90s. No one understood the value of heavyweights like King; not coincidentally, no one made more money off them—in 2006, Forbes estimated that he'd taken in \$1 billion off more than 600 bouts over 33 years and his personal worth was \$350 million.

The A-side of this fight is Deontay Wilder, the WBC champ, a muscular 6' 7" puncher with a pulverizing right hand from Tuscaloosa, Ala. In another era, another life, Wilder would have been a King fighter. What King could have done with an Olympic bronze medalist, what stories he could have spun with a fighter who once drove Budweiser trucks, who took up boxing only to help pay his sick daughter's medical bills. *Only in America!* King would bellow, and a roomful of reporters would nod in agreement. Wilder isn't with King, though. Never considered it. He signed with Golden Boy Promotions, headed by Oscar De La Hoya, after the 2008 Olympics, then six years later switched to Al Haymon, the little-seen manager who has more than 150 fighters in his stable. King? He's in Birmingham representing Eric Molina, a 33-year-old journeyman who's expected to serve as a welcome mat for Wilder's homecoming.

Outside City Hall, a modest crowd mills around metal barriers, many of whom noticed the set for the impending weigh-in—the stage, the cameras and the police blockade—and simply wondered what the fuss was about. Molina and Wilder appear and generate a tepid reaction; in boxing's splintered state, even a heavyweight champion is anonymous. Not King. The moment he emerges from the building, cellphones are ripped from pockets and aimed in his direction. Arms jerk

into the air, and the thin layer of onlookers presses forward, searching for the best angle to photograph a boxing icon. Approaching the dais, King climbs the steps slowly. One step. Pause. *Don, over here!* One step. Pause. *Don, look this way!* King is 83, and though time has not dulled his mind, it has weakened his body. A nasty fall last October put him in the hospital with a head injury, and though King swears a battery of tests came up with nothing, he is more careful. He's eating better and has stopped smoking cigars. He will sniff them, lick them and chew them beyond recognition, but he won't light them up.

On stage Wilder and Molina stand nose-to-nose, a traditional prematch promotional photo op that can yield tasty B-roll if the fighters are feisty. King stands between them, that familiar Cheshire cat grin creasing his face. When the fighters separate, King doesn't move. Center stage, he randomly pulls out one of the 17 flags he's carrying and raises it. The American flag. Then the Puerto Rican flag. Then the flag to honor America's POWs. He smiles. He waves. He pivots toward many of the voices calling for him. Members of both fighters' entourages approach; they want pictures with



### HEAVY TRAFFIC

King posed with Ali and Frazier in 1975, walked with the president of Zaire before the Rumble in the Jungle in '74, and flashed smiles and smackeroots with Tyson in '89.



King too. For a few minutes he stands in the oppressive heat like a wax figurine, a living relic whose image onlookers eagerly try to capture for posterity.

King's part in this promotion is nominal. His name doesn't appear on the banner behind the fighters. Showtime's Jimmy Lennon Jr., emceeing the weigh-in, doesn't announce King as a copromoter. Financial terms were negotiated by Haymon. Logistics for the event were handled by event promoter Lou DiBella. It's been three years since King was the sole promoter on an HBO or Showtime bout, and network executives say they have no current plans to return him to that role, either. In the twilight of a decorated career the most visible promoter in boxing history has become an afterthought.





**D**ON KING PRODUCTIONS exists in an unmarked building in Deerfield Beach, Fla., nestled onto a leafy plot of land that abuts I-95. King's company was founded in New York City in the 1970s before relocating to South Florida in the late '80s. Two stone lions flank the walkway to the entrance. A faded gold placard etched with CIRCLE TRAVEL—King's travel company—is the only identifier, near the door. A marble monument memorializing King's wife of 50 years, Henrietta, who died in 2010, rests on a patch of dirt nearby.

Once, King's office bustled with activity. He employed roughly 50 people in his heyday; today, the number of full-time staffers has dwindled to around 10. Many have been with King for decades. Dana Jamison, the company's vice president of operations, has worked for King for 29 years; Celia Tuckman, an executive vice president, has been with him for 37. King's past is polluted by shady business deals. In 1980 Ali sued him after King shortchanged the champ of \$1.2 million of an \$8 million purse, but Ali dropped the case after King sent him \$50,000. In 2004 King paid Tyson \$14 million as part of a settlement of a lawsuit in which Tyson accused King of stealing \$100 million from him. But around the office there are tales only of King's benevolence. Al Bonnani, a semiretired trainer who has worked closely with King, recalled one Christmas in the late 1990s. Bonnani's wife was

sick, and he was struggling to pay the medical bills. King called Bonnani to his office and handed him an envelope with \$25,000 in it.

King's personal office takes up two rooms on the second floor. It's less a workspace than a shrine to his career, displaying everything from a handwritten letter from George Foreman demanding King promote his next fight after the Rumble in the Jungle to a sprawling collection of swords. Nearly every foot of wall space displays a picture or newspaper story acknowledging a King accomplishment. There's a signed photograph with Jimmy Carter. A framed letter from the New York City fire department thanking King for a \$1 million donation after 9/11. A picture of King aboard a military helicopter in the Middle East. "I ain't no Brian Williams," says King. "You see me in that helicopter." In an adjacent conference room he puts on a 34-minute video that is little more than a

*"People say he is the greatest promoter in boxing," Cunningham says. "I beg to differ. He could have been with his star power, but he promoted himself more than any fighter."*

montage of fighters, network executives and heads of state lauding King.

Most of the memorabilia is old. Decades old. King now represents just a handful of fighters; only one, super lightweight Amir Imam, is a serious prospect. In the 1980s and '90s, King battled Bob Arum to sign the world's elite. Today, Arum's Top Rank is still one of the most powerful promotional companies; King's is on the brink of extinction.

Where others have evolved, King has not. He isn't active on social media; he can't stream untelevised fights on his website because he doesn't have one. Unlike Arum, King has no heir apparent because he remains a one-man show. "Don trusts very few people," says Seth Abraham, former president of HBO Sports. "Over the course of his life as a boxing promoter, you can count on one hand the number of people that Don really trusts intimately, completely and totally. As a result, the organization is him. In effect, there [is] no organization."

Of all the conflicts King had with fighters, the one with Tyson was the most destructive. It was a nasty dispute that caused potential clients to wonder, If this could happen to *Mike*, it might happen to me. King admits it. "Did it hurt, yeah," says King. "He's poor, and he's telling lies. Give me \$400 million and say you robbed me. I loved Tyson. We made a lot of money together. He threw his away. I kept mine."

In recent years, too, fighters have viewed King as being more about his own interests. Take Steve Cunningham, a two-time cruiserweight champion. Starting in 2002, Cunningham fought for eight years under King's banner. A former Navy serviceman, Cunningham signed believing King would exploit his military background. What he got was indifference. "A guy like DK, as soon as you come into his office, he places a price tag on you," says Cunningham. "He decides, This is what I'm going to spend on this dude. People say he is the greatest promoter in boxing. I beg to differ. He could have been with his star power, but he promoted himself more than any fighter. With his power, he could have made any fighter a star."

When King speaks, his words—spit out as if they're branches passing through a wood chipper, piling up into long, rambling paragraphs littered



## MIDDLE ROUND

King's usual regalia is as eclectic and jarring as his personality, on which his company was built.

reference any future matches. He admits he would like to be back atop the promoting field, but says he isn't haunted by his descent.

Others demur. "I think it kills him," says Abraham. "I think he's trying to figure out how to get back in. It's more than wistful. It's like half of his blood supply has been drained out of him because he's not the dominant promoter."

**I**T'S TWO hours before the fight when King saunters into Molina's dressing room. Immediately, the dozen or so people in it burst into applause. Again, it's the Don King show, complete with photo ops and non sequiturs. "And the new . . . !" King bellows. More applause. A referee comes in to take a picture with King. Molina, still dressing, pauses to get one too. Sensing the moment, King slips into character.

"They counted us out, we counted us in!"

"We going to celebrate tonight with the whole nation of Iran!"

"They ain't going to give it to you, you have got to take it!"

The shame of King's decline is that he still has much to offer. "He is indefatigable," says Abraham. "He loves the action. He loves the adrenaline that comes from promoting." As boxing has been pushed toward the fringes, King remains one of the sport's most recognizable faces, the rare figure mainstream outlets still pay attention to. "The public's fascination with Don has not de-

with irrelevant historical digressions—seem to confirm his impulse toward self-aggrandizement. Ask King what he wants out of the rest of his career, and he declares a desire to be a leader on racial issues and women's rights. He talks about writing a book and the interest he has received in a biopic. He expresses an interest in bringing bouts to Egypt and other areas of the Middle East. He doesn't bring up any fighter. He doesn't

creased at all," says Stephen Espinoza, executive vice president of Showtime Sports. "He's a unique personality. His busiest years are certainly behind him, but his residual celebrity value still exists."

King's core promoting principles are missed. Boxing events have grown top-heavy, with undercards that do little to support the main event. King's shows were usually deep and well-balanced, which enhanced the fans' experience. Today, they are exposed to far too many one-sided bouts slapped together by promoters fearful of leading a fighter into a loss. To King, matches needed to be meaningful. "You fight with Don, he is going to see if your teeth are sharp enough," says Cunningham. "Every guy I fought for Don King got me closer to a world title."

A King comeback seems unlikely. Molina lost, dropped four times en route to a ninth-round knockout at Bartow Arena. Later, at a press conference, King praised Molina's courage, gratuitously gushing over a largely ineffective night. He also lauded Wilder for bringing a fight to Alabama, a state with a history of racism that King had referenced often during the week. "Birmingham is back," says King, "ain't no stopping her now."

Minutes later, as the crowd dispersed and Wilder continued to celebrate with his team, the man who enjoyed so many golden moments in boxing slipped out a back door. □



# SWIMSUITS & MUSIC CITY



**THANKS SPORTS ILLUSTRATED  
FOR LAUNCHING THE 2015 SWIMSUIT ISSUE IN MUSIC CITY!  
AND TO THESE SPECIAL PARTNERS  
WHO HELPED MAKE IT "SWIMMINGLY" SUCCESSFUL.**



## **FASHION:**

- Amanda Valentine
- Cadeau Nashville
- Ceri Hoover
- Gibson
- Margaret Ellis Jewelry
- Peter Nappi
- White's Mercantile

## **CULINARY:**

- Acme Feed & Seed
- Adele's by Jonathan Waxman
- City House
- Etch Restaurant
- Giovanni Ristorante
- Husk Restaurant
- Jimmy Kelly's
- Pinewood Social
- Prima
- Saffire
- Sam's Sushi
- Sinema Restaurant & Bar
- The Southern Steak & Oyster
- The Sutler Saloon
- Urban Grub

## **MUSIC:**

- **Kings Of Leon** and
- A Thousand Horses
- Chris Stapleton
- Chris Young
- firekid
- Holly Williams
- Keb' Mo'
- Mikky Ekko
- Moon Taxi
- Nikki Lane

- rayLand baxter
- Striking Matches
- Sugar + the Hi-Lows
- The Ettes
- The Weeks
- The Whigs
- Will Hoge

## **ADDITIONAL THANKS TO:**

- Loews Vanderbilt Hotel
- Schermerhorn Symphony Center

**Nashville**  
MUSIC CITY

[VISITMUSICCITY.COM](http://VISITMUSICCITY.COM)



W A T N 2015

Men

# Baha

O

NE WAY to truly appreciate the transcendent, globe-shrinking power of a hit song: Stand witness as 20,000 Bahamians sing along, at 1:30 in the morning, to a ballad first recorded by a redheaded British sprite. Ed Sheeran, the young West Yorkshireman responsible for “Thinking Out Loud,” a paean to everlasting love, was not on the main stage of the Junkanoo Carnival in Nassau, on May 9, but his recent chart-topper was there in full, spun by a DJ. Even those whose musical tastes veer hard away from pop ballads would have conceded that the sight of so many people

swaying and belting it out in unison was as stirring as it was unexpected.

The crowd had not gathered at that hour for an impromptu karaoke session. The DJ was playing Sheeran’s ballad to kill time while grizzled roadies set up the stage for one of the headliners of Junkanoo, a multiday, government-sponsored music festival. And, love ballad and all, the audience eventually grew impatient. Fans wanted to hear the Baha Men, the most successful act the Bahamas has ever produced. They wanted, most of all, to hear the band shout its famous question. It was the question that exactly 15 years ago turned the Baha Men into a household name overnight. It was the question that brought them (often very famous) fans and (often very heated) haters in equal measure. And it was





*Fifteen years later, their Grammy-winning hit remains a total dog (to say nothing of the band's biggest fan, some baseball player named Alex). But this much is undeniable: "Who Let the Dogs Out" revolutionized music's place in sports*

**BY BEN REITER**

**RAISE THE WOOF**

Success and all, there are new Men in Baha since you last heard them: Knight (in white shorts) and Leroy Butler (second from right) have joined Rik Carey (far right) on the mike.

Photograph by Jeffery Salter  
For Sports Illustrated



the question that, in many ways, made them one of the first musical sensations to spring from stadiums of frenzied sports fans and arenas; in those venues that query was entirely inescapable in the year 2000 and was, without irony, adopted as a rallying cry by athletes and teams across the country. It was, in its way, one of the most widely asked musical questions of all time.

**I**N 1998 a guy brought a VHS tape to Steve Greenberg, then an executive at Mercury Records in New York City. The gentleman introduced himself as the leader of a band called Fat Jakk and his Pack of Pets, and the tape contained a music video for a cover of a Caribbean-flavored song that he hoped Greenberg would produce. “It was just an awful record,” Greenberg says now. “Humans in giant animal costumes running around—it was the stupidest video I’d ever seen. . . . But the hook stuck in my head.”

“Who let the dogs out?” the song repeatedly inquired.

“Woof! Woof! Woof! Woof!” came the response.

Greenberg knows hits. In 1997 he produced a song, “MMMBop,” by a group of young brothers named Hanson, that reached No. 1 in 27 countries. Before that, he earned a master’s degree from Stanford in Applied Communication Research—in essence, he’d studied why some new things become popular, and others don’t. Greenberg suspected that Fat Jakk would fall into the latter category.

But the song was another story, and he soon found himself scouring online message boards, rifling through the world music rack at Tower Records, searching for its provenance.

Finally, he found it: The song had been written and originally recorded by a Trinidadian named Anselm Douglas, under the title “Doggie.” Greenberg wanted to remake and rename the tune, and he knew just the hardworking, musically gifted band that could turn it into his next chart topper.

Five years earlier Greenberg had signed a six-man Bahamian act called High Voltage (a few members of which had been playing and recording together since the late 1970s) and rechristened them the Baha Men. In ’94 the gang appeared as themselves in the romantic comedy *My Father the Hero*, alongside Gerard Depardieu and a 15-year-old Katherine Heigl. They became huge, not just in the Caribbean but also, for some reason, in Japan, where

they toured for seven years and where fans would queue up six hours before their shows. Still, after four albums on three separate labels, the Baha Men had yet to make a dent in the U.S. In early 2000, Greenberg believed that could change.

He faced two problems: The band didn’t want to cover another Caribbean act’s song, and the lead singer, Nehemiah Hield, had just quit. But Greenberg convinced the group that this was the crossover hit they’d been looking for, and after holding open auditions at a Nassau resort, the Baha Men had not just one new singer but three—Rik Carey, Marvin Prosper Knowles and

*“It was just awful,” Greenberg says of the original pitch for the song. “The stupidest video I’d ever seen. . . . But the hook stuck in my head.”*

Omerit Hield, all around 20 years old—who also gave them some younger blood. (Several of the group’s founding musicians were by then nearing 50, including Rik’s father, guitarist Patrick Carey.)

The recording process presented its own hurdles. “They were great singers and musicians,” says Greenberg, “but they were crummy barkers. I couldn’t get them to bark up to my standards, so I barked myself. I’m the main barker on the record.”

Doubters remained. “I was skeptical about the song’s appeal,” says Mike Mangini, a veteran producer who worked with Greenberg on the track. “Steve laid it all out for me: ‘They’re going to be

## Fields of Gold



*“Who Let the Dogs Out” wasn’t the first song to send a stadium into a tizzy. In 1995, ESPN released a compilation celebrating the art of moving*

*sports fans with music. Here, on its 20th anniversary, is an update on all 14 artists on Jock Jams, Volume 1.*

By Jori Epstein, Angelina Matarozzi and Carls Niedospial

### 2 Unlimited

**“Twilight Zone” and “Get Ready for This”**

Dutch singers Ray Slijngaard and Anita Doth split up in 1996 to explore solo careers (Google “Do You Think I’m Sexy” to find out how that went . . . better yet, don’t) but reunited in 2009, put out a greatest hits album and resumed touring. Whaddya say: July 19 in Bielsko-Biala, Poland, anyone?

### Tag Team

**“Whoomp! There It Is”**

Twenty-two years after Denver high school buddies Steve Gibson and Cecil Glenn reached No. 2 on the *Billboard* Hot 100, the rappers still pocket as much as \$70,000 a year from use of “Whoomp!” They go uncompensated, however, when it’s chanted at Brazilian soccer games and at MMA matches, where it remains oddly popular.





song as he led the Ravens to Super Bowl XXXV (“Ray would invite us to his parties—this is how tight we were,” says Rik Carey) and was adopted by UConn’s dominant women’s basketball team, the Huskies. But the song truly caught hold in major league baseball, where the Mariners were one of the first teams to adopt it. “That started as a goof,” says Traube. “Seattle had a country-western catcher, a square white guy”—Joe Oliver—“and to break his balls they played ‘Who Let the Dogs Out’ as his walk-up music. But Alex Rodriguez liked it so much, he stole the song for himself.”

By October 2000, no fewer than five of baseball’s eight postseason teams (the Cardinals, Giants, Mariners, Mets and White Sox) were playing “WLTDO” as their rally song. When the Mets reached the World Series—against the Yankees, who had played it for a time before ceding it to their crosstown rivals—they hired the Baha Men to perform before Game 4, in front of 55,000 fans. “I can’t stand that ‘Let Out the Dogs’ song,” lamented then Mets co-owner Nelson Doubleday. “I have three dogs of my own.” His team, and his fans, disagreed.

“Most songs peak on radio,” says Greenberg. “‘Who Let the Dogs Out’ peaked at the World Series. It was the biggest sports anthem ever, in the sense that it got all its strength from being a sports anthem, and the radio was secondary. It was the only hit record that was ever like that.”

**B**UT WHY this song? And why like that?

Greenberg has a theory. While the lyrics concern competing groups of men and women in a club, very few listeners tried to decipher them—they focused instead on the pulsing sound, the catchy hook. “Who let the dogs out? It could mean anything,” the producer says. “You’re free to project any meaning you want. But it sounds cool to say it.”

Herschel Small, one of the band’s longtime guitarists, suggests that the song

## LIGHTNING ROD

Even with support from Rodriguez (center) and a slew of athletes, “WLTDO” was voted No. 8 in a *Rolling Stone* poll of the worst songs of the 1990s.

playing it in stadiums across the country. It’s going to win a Grammy.’ I was like, ‘O.K., sure it is, Steve.’ Every single thing he predicted came true.”

The key to fulfilling Greenberg’s vision was getting the song played in stadiums. He imagined tens of thousands of fans joyously barking along as their team took the field, and again when they had something to celebrate. To that end, as he was preparing to release the song—on a new label, S-Curve Records, that he established for the occasion—he hired a marketer, Fred Traube, to court stadium entertainment directors across the country. “I told Fred, ‘I want you to find the guy who plays the records in every stadium and work that guy like he’s a radio station programmer.’ Today it’s common, but back then nobody did this.”

Vito Vitiello, the Mets’ director of entertainment for the past 24 years, says Traube’s pitch went like this: “You gotta play this, you gotta play this, you gotta play this. . . .” And it worked. “Who Let the Dogs Out” became Ray Lewis’s theme

## Black Box “Strike It Up”

The Italian group still has a hold on hockey fans: The playing of “Strike It Up” at Madison Square Garden continues to send New York Rangers superfan Dancin’ Larry into an arm-flapping frenzy. A history lesson, Larry: Black Box inspired legislation in 1990 by failing to credit singer Martha Wash, whose vocals were lip-synched in the video by a model. That’s now forbidden.

## 69 Boyz “Tootsee Roll”

The eight-member outfit failed to live up to the everlasting nature of its hit’s eponym: The Boyz’ last album, “Trunk Funk 101,” fell flat in 2001. Lead singer La Shaun Van Bryant, at least, enjoyed solo success: He worked with T-Pain and Jay Z, wrote the theme song to the movie *Space Jam* and, in ‘08, released a clothing line.

## K7 “Come Baby Come”

Born Louis Sharpe, K7 rode “Come Baby Come” to No. 18 on the *Billboard* charts in 1993, then in the early 2000s rejoined the Latin freestyle group TKA. In ‘12 that trio was invited to throw out the first pitch at a Marlins game; alas, K7 lost a coin flip and a bandmate made the toss.



## ✓ Rob Base and DJ E-Z Rock “It Takes Two”

They split in 1989, one year after releasing what would become an all-time dance favorite. Base went solo; E-Z Rock began dealing with the diabetes that would take his life in 2014, at 46. Today their song backs up J.J. Watt’s gyrating in a Verizon ad, and it’s the walk-up music for Red Sox catcher David Ross, who says the ditty evokes “childhood fun times.”

managed to tick all the boxes that 15 years later are common to many viral Internet memes: dogs and sports and kids (to whom its infectious barking appealed). Says Small, “As the song started to catch on, our road manager said, ‘Guys, even if you wanted to stop this, you couldn’t. This song has its own legs.’ It just took off.”

In the year after “WLTD0” was released, the Baha Men flew more than 100,000 miles as they ricocheted between stadiums and talk shows—“Sally, Leno, Regis and Kathie Lee—twice,” says Small. Their full-length album, also called *Who Let the Dogs Out*, reached No. 5 on the U.S. charts and went triple platinum (roughly 3.5 million copies sold) almost entirely on the strength of a single hit. In February 2001, as Greenberg had predicted, the Baha Men won a Grammy for Best Dance Recording, though two members would miss the moment—they had ducked out for pizza.

Afterward, a sour Moby, whose “Natural Blues” lost out in the same category, said, “I think it’s quite a catchy little pop song, and my feeling is, if I’m going to lose an award, I’d rather lose to a novelty act than a serious act. It feels like less of a slight.”

To Bahamians, though, “WLTD0” was more than a novelty. When the Baha Men (the only Grammy winner that the archipelagic nation has produced) returned home following their year in the States, they were feted with a victory parade that circled the entirety of New Providence, their 21-by-seven-mile home island. “It was crazy,” says Rik Carey. “People lined both sides of the road holding Baha Men posters, wearing our T-shirts and hats, chanting our name.”

The Baha Men were more than a one-hit wonder. They were national heroes.

**T**HE VINYL tent that had been erected as the Baha Men’s dressing room stood empty as midnight approached in Nassau. Inside, a table dotted with trays of cold cuts, covered by sweating Saran wrap, sat untouched as thumbnail-sized beetles buzzed around a single light bulb dangling from the roof. The Baha Men were late arriving—though it wasn’t the band’s fault; security had to be persuaded to let them all in.



*“If I’m going to lose an award, I’d rather lose to a novelty act than to a serious act,” Moby said, dismissing his Grammy-winning competitors. “It feels like less of a slight.”*

who’d originally shouted the chorus and performed the song’s tongue-twisting rap.

The band produced songs for several movie soundtracks and released three albums after “WLTD0,” the last in 2004, and though none included a hit, there are other reasons for their long stretch of inactivity. Isaiah Taylor, the band’s bassist and leader, cites poor management and a desire not to dilute the Baha Men brand. Dyson Knight, a singer who joined in 2006, says it’s something else too: “I feel like the guys were a bit relaxed, not really eager to get out there and do anything.”

“WLTD0” made the band wealthy—although not as much as you might think, largely be-

## C+C Music Factory “Gonna Make You Sweat”

A lip-synching scandal (involving the same singer from “Strike It Up”) and poor sophomore-album sales slowed C+C, but the 1995 death of co-producer David Cole officially ended the band. (That is, until a short-lived 2010 comeback.) Lead singer Freedom Williams bought the CBA’s Atlanta Krunk in ’07, but that team disbanded, too, in ’09.

## Naughty by Nature “Hip Hop Hooray”

Three decades spent living up to its name brought the band a litany of legal problems: copyright infringement, weapons possession and an incident last year that ended in a high-speed police chase. In between, the trio played Fenway Park in 2011, becoming the first hip-hop act to face the Green Monster.



## M/A/R/R/S “Pump Up the Volume”

One-hit wonder? Yes. But also just one year. The supergroup (the two Brits behind A.R. Kane, plus the members of Colourbox, whose proposed 1986 World Cup anthem was rejected) broke up over financial disagreements in ’87 rather than produce the follow-up song they’d discussed.

## Snap! “The Power”

The Frankfurt dance group found fame in 1990 behind rapper frontman Turbo B, a former special forces bomb technician who’s still big in Austria, Australia and Sweden, but the band broke up in ’96—and again in 2000. Yet Snap! still moves people: In ’11, a 39-story mall in Seoul, South Korea, was evacuated after a Tae Bo class shook the building while exercising to “The Power.”





cause they didn't write the song and they had to split their share of the proceeds nine ways. (One industry insider estimates that the band's total take from U.S. record sales was between \$3 million and \$4 million.) "It did very well for me," says Taylor, who won't confirm numbers, "but I was dumb; I gave away all the money to people who needed help. I believed that's the best thing anyone can do in life."

Another explanation for the Baha Men's quiet decade is a plight shared by many acts who produce out-of-the-blue smashes: a cultural backlash that can overwhelm a band, no matter its musical chops. "That song was a double-edged sword," says Taylor. "It was very good for us, but it was

## PUPPY LOVE

Performing at Nassau's Junkanoo in May, the rebuilt Baha Men debuted their new tunes and, of course, barked out their hit.

very bad for our other songs. It overpowered them. I believe we have better songs, but 'Dogs'—I don't care how good we bring it, that's going to kill it." The song eventually became a punch line, its nadir coming in 2008 when presidential candidate Mitt Romney shouted its chorus—and then barked—as he posed for a photo alongside a group of African-American voters.

"I am proud to have two songs [including "MMMBop"] that always make the top 10 of every Worst Records of All-time list," says Greenberg, whose S-Curve Records recently produced the Andy Grammer hit "Honey I'm Good." "Except they're not. 'Dogs' is a really good record. That's why it won a Grammy. It's tight, it's colorful, it's infectious. There was magic in that record."

Though they long ago amicably split from Greenberg, the Baha Men are now attempting to produce more magic. Their new album, *Ride With Me*, will be released by Sony in mid-August; its first single, "Night and Day," appeared on the official FIFA 2014 World Cup compilation, and its second, "Off the Leash," calls back to "Dogs." That one "will definitely kick in clubs," says the track's producer, Troyton Rami, a Grammy winner for Sean Paul's "Gimme the Light."

Adds Knight, "It's very difficult to re-create a song like 'Who Let the Dogs Out,' and we didn't try. What we tried to do was re-create that energy and that life."

This, really, encapsulates the challenge facing any band that has experienced some success, particularly one whose hit became such a cultural touchstone, tied to such a specific and now long-ago moment—and, you know, involves barking. The Baha Men admit they are sick of rehearsing "WLTD0," but they insist they'll never tire of playing it live. "Trust me, every time we perform it, you can forget all the backlash," says Rik Carey. "The outcome is always the same."

When the Baha Men took the stage at the Junkanoo Carnival, the crowd, packed shoulder-to-shoulder and waving glow sticks, received them respectfully at first. The band members were well prepared for their 90-minute set—they'd been rehearsing for this night every weekday for six months—and the audience politely, if not raucously, swayed to their old local hits, as well as the new stuff. Then everyone got what they had been waiting for. It was 2:54 a.m., and 20,000 people were barking. □

## EMF "Unbelievable"

Break up, reunite, repeat. (Current status: active.) Meanwhile the band—whose bassist, Zac Foley, died of an overdose in 2002—has seen its 1991 hit repeatedly repurposed: Hallmark infused musical Mother's Day cards with the rhythm, an ad for Kraft sang about its "crumbelievable" cheese and the Twins surged to a World Series win singing "Twin-believable."

## Village People "Y.M.C.A."

Of the 20-plus men who've gesticulated letters for the disco troupe, all of the mainstays are alive except Glenn Hughes, who in 2001 was buried in his biker getup. The People played the '08 MLB All-Star Game, and after Yankees groundskeepers adopted the dance in 1996, the Daily News wrote that it reminded "us all that this ... cutthroat business is about having a good time."

## Technotronic ↘ "Pump Up the Jam"

Post-"Jam," MC Eric and Ya Kid K pursued individual careers, but they ended up on the same stage again in 2009—a reunion that turned into a series of 20th anniversary concerts. Today the two share the stage at '90s throwback shows and record separately.



## Gary Glitter "Rock and Roll Part 2"

Glitter's sexual abuse of three young girls in the 1970s led to his sentencing in February to 16 years in prison. Deemed to be a "habitual sexual predator" (he served time for sex-related offenses in Vietnam too, in 2006), Glitter, 70, was told by a judge that he'd have received more time if the law allowed.

# Dolph Lundgren

*He was the embodiment of cold war villainy as the stone-faced killing machine Ivan Drago in Rocky IV. What few knew back then: The unknown actor from Sweden had a bio that would make his one of the most astonishing Wiki entries in movie history*

BY CHRIS NASHAWATY

Photographs by  
Brian Lowe  
For Sports Illustrated

## ENTER THE DRAGO

Lundgren's career was hardly a wrap after his boxing breakout: He's since portrayed He-Man and a cyborg, and in 2015 he'll play a sub commander alongside George Clooney.

**I**T'S BEEN 30 years since moviegoers first laid eyes on Dolph Lundgren. Back then the cold war was still raging, Reagan had christened the Soviet Union as the Evil Empire and, in Hollywood, a heavyweight battle of ideologies was playing out onscreen: the Italian Stallion versus a 6' 4" Communist killing machine named Ivan Drago. Never mind that the 27-year-old playing the robotically lethal, hammer-and-sickle villain of *Rocky IV* was actually Swedish. Or that, betraying a physique seemingly carved from granite, he'd recently earned a Fulbright scholarship to get his Ph.D. in chemical engineering from MIT. When Lundgren croaked "I must break you" (that after, you know, *killing* Apollo Creed) he became the most despised athlete in the free world.

If you're not a fan of red-meat action films and shoddy straight-to-video thrillers, you probably assumed that Lundgren's big-screen career ended right there. His car, after all, is tricked out today with a dashboard plaque bearing that famous *Rocky IV* catchphrase. But before you interpret this as the sad affectation of a faded star clinging to past box-office glories, you should know this: That car is a \$300,000 custom-made Ferrari 612 Scaglietti GT. Since moving back to Los Angeles in 2010 after divorcing his wife of 17 years (the couple has two daughters: Ida, 19, and Greta, 13), Lundgren, 57, has seen his career take off again. He starred in three movies in '14 alone, bringing his IMDB tally to 53, and he has another eight films in the can, slated for release, including the Coen brothers comedy *Hail, Caesar!* alongside George Clooney. Whether at home or on a far-flung movie set, he still punishes himself with a brutal weights-and-martial-arts regimen five days a week. And it shows.





On a recent afternoon, with a white-knuckled passenger riding shotgun, the man once known as Mother Russia's Great White Hope raced through the winding streets of Beverly Hills, having fully surrendered to the temptations of Tinseltown—a blond-haired, blue-eyed blur behind aviator sunglasses tearing west on Sunset, toward the Pacific. Dolph Lundgren is doing just fine.

*So, how does a Swedish engineering student wind up in a Rocky movie?*

**DL:** I'd met this singer, Grace Jones, and we became a couple. I moved to New York City [from Nyland, Sweden, after a stop in Washington] to be with her. I was a black belt in karate and had won the [British and Australian Opens], and I had a Fulbright scholarship. I had six months off before I started school, and Grace took me into her life, which was basically Studio 54 and Andy Warhol's Factory. The gates of hell sort of opened up, and Dolph Lundgren walked right through. Come September, I went up to MIT on my big black motorcycle, all dressed in leather, and I was very much an oddity. The professors were expecting this brilliant, nerdy Swedish kid. They didn't know what to make of me. After a week I went back to New York and studied acting, and after a few months I was sent to an audition for a boxing movie.

*You didn't know it was Rocky IV?*

**DL:** No. And the woman running the audition said, "Next! . . . Name? . . . Height?" When I said 6' 4", she said, "Too tall . . . next!" Then I saw the poster behind her for *Rocky IV*. I couldn't believe I was blowing this chance. So I went home and took some pictures in boxing gear and sent them to someone who knew someone who had maybe met Sly Stallone once. Six months later they flew me to L.A.

*Is that when you first met your screenmate?*

**DL:** Yeah. I took a cab to the Paramount lot and [Stallone] came out—very tan, long Rambo hair, shorter than I thought [laughs], but he still looked tough. He said there were 5,000 guys up for the part. He told me to go back to New York and put on 10 more pounds of muscle. So I trained for six months, even though I still didn't have the part. Then I had to go back and do the monologue where I say, "My name is Drago." The next day I got the call from Sly.

*Did the two of you train in the ring together?*

**DL:** Yeah, for five months! Six days a week: an hour and a half of weights every morning, and boxing for two hours in the afternoon. There were no stunt doubles; it's all real.

*It's such a rah-rah, flag-waving cold war movie.*

**DL:** It's a very patriotic movie, and I was obviously the bad guy. Afterward I realized that people actually think that stuff is real. Suddenly I was the guy who killed Apollo Creed! But look: It started me on a career tangent I hadn't planned. To get a black belt takes seven years. To get an MIT Ph.D. takes like 10 years. But in Hollywood, all of a sudden I was in this *huge* picture. I walked into the premiere as an unknown. And when I walked out, two hours later, everything had changed. I was famous. It takes years to recover from something like that.

*How so?*

**DL:** It's totally unnatural for people you've never met to feel as though they know you. It's very seductive. I was in my 20s, and if you want to meet a lot

## OFF TO A ROCKY START

Lundgren still enjoys a little punchy-punchy, but he does it without his original red-and-yellow trunks: One year after filming, he says, "my manager put [my wardrobe] into storage and someone forgot to pay the fee, so they took everything. Someone somewhere has that."



*"Jean-Claude Van Damme was never a fighter," says Lundgren. "I was. I have 30 pounds on him. I don't think a fight would last that long."*

of chicks, that helps a lot. But on a deeper level, you end up not knowing who you are anymore.

*Is it true that you put Stallone in the hospital while filming?*

**DL:** Even though we choreographed the fight scenes, you still get hit. And Sly, he's a bit of a perfectionist. He wants everything to look brutal and real. And he was asking for it. He has a masochistic part of his personality, like Mel Gibson. Maybe it's a Catholic thing. He had me hit him quite hard—then I got a call saying that we had to take two weeks off because he was in the hospital. I guess he bruised his heart muscle pretty badly.

*Do you remember how much you got paid?*

**DL:** I think I made 25 grand. And I was happy. That seemed like a lot of money at the time.

*What sort of opportunities did you get right after that?*

**DL:** The next year ABC hired me as a commentator for the Sugar Ray Leonard–Marvin Hagler fight.





I interviewed both of them; I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I sat ringside and got hit with a little blood. The thing I remember most is that Sugar Ray was taking a lot of punishment, and his cornerman told him not to look into the spit bucket because there was so much blood in there.

*Did you ever feel like a fraud, becoming famous so quickly?*

**DL:** The Impostor Complex? Sure, I felt that a lot. And if you want to get deeper into it, I can tell you the main reason I got into [martial arts] fighting was because I had a conflict with my father. If you talk to boxers, a lot of them have issues with their dads, and it takes physical expression because you're trying to protect yourself or assert yourself, or there's something you have to get out of your system. I had that with my dad. He had a lot of violence in him. And I took some of that as a kid.

*At what age?*

**DL:** It started when I was five or six and went on until 13 or 14. Martial arts was a response to that. It's why I was good at it. If I got hit hard, something would kick in and I would become very hard to beat. I didn't give a s--- because I'd already been hit.

*You seem like a pussycat in person, but people have a scary impression of you. There's a story about some guys trying to rob your home. . . .*

**DL:** About six years ago, I was shooting a movie

and I got a call that three Eastern European guys showed up with ski masks and guns at our house in Marbella, Spain. They'd tied up my wife and two daughters. They wanted my wife to open the safes, and they threatened to hurt my kids. And my older daughter said to them, "If my dad was here, it would be different." And then they saw a picture of me in the house and must have gotten scared. They split. Afterward, I called some old KGB assassins I know, but they never found them. It could have gotten ugly.

*You co-starred with Jean-Claude Van Damme in three Universal Soldier movies. What would happen if you two fought in real life?*

**DL:** Look, he was never a fighter. I was. He's a nice guy and he's a great film fighter, but I have at least 30 pounds on him. Let's put it this way: I don't think it would last that long. That's just being honest.

*You once flirted with going pro as a fighter. Are you still a boxing fan?*

**DL:** To some extent. I just feel that recently it's been a little dull, especially on the heavyweight front, which I'm more interested in. I liked Mike Tyson, Ali, the big hitters. Boxing has lost some of the thrill and danger it used to have, when you thought, *That guy will be lucky to walk out of there on his own*. It seems more like a marketing game now: Try to make as much money and take the least amount of damage as possible. It's not as exciting to watch.

*It sounds like you might be more interested than in MMA. . . .*

**DL:** I am. It's more dangerous, more of a show, more real, guys are going after each other a little more. I'm a big fan of Lyoto Machida. But I'm still a little uneasy about mixing money and martial arts. It takes away some of the respect, self-control; it becomes a blood sport. I always think that if these two guys—or women—entered the Octagon as a samurai would, knowing that only one is going to walk out of there alive, the attitude would be very different.

*What about your old Rocky foe: Have you and Stallone kept in touch?*

**DL:** After *Rocky IV* we saw each other here and there. Then, when he did *Rocky Balboa*, in 2006, I went to the premiere and we caught up. A week later I got back to my hotel room, and he'd delivered this huge poster from Africa: the two of our faces [from *Rocky IV*] hand-painted on a burlap sack. A couple of years later Sly wanted to talk to me about *The Expendables*. I remember reading the description of my character: a drunk, murderous Swede. I was like [sarcastically], Thanks a lot, man!

*He's doing another Rocky movie, Creed, about Apollo's grandson. If he asked you to be in it, would you?*

**DL:** I don't think I'd play Ivan Drago again. I want to let that character rest. People have good memories of that film, and I'd hate to mess that up. . . . [For *Hail, Caesar!*] they wanted me to play a Russian submarine commander. I'm careful about playing Russian characters because I played one that was very iconic. But I said O.K. On the first day, I was in the makeup trailer with Channing Tatum. He was like, "I can't believe I'm meeting you; when I was a kid, I saw all your movies!" I haven't done Academy Award-level movies, but that felt nice.

*Do you ever think what your life would be like if you'd never left MIT?*

**DL:** My goal was to get my Ph.D., then study business at Harvard and then work at an oil company or something. Knowing what I know now, I don't think that would have made me very happy. It sounds weird, but show business kind of saved my life. It was a way to find out who I really was. Now I'm just going to try and stay around for another 30 years. □

# Tommy John Casualty

*Elbow reconstruction operations are so common among major leaguers, and so often deemed successful, that pitchers who undergo the procedure (aka Tommy John surgery) don't often fear for their careers. But what about players whose arms are never the same?*

**BY STEPHANIE APSTEIN**

Photograph by  
**Jonathan Ferrey**  
For Sports Illustrated

## **CAPTAIN HOOK**

Despite UCL surgery, Bernero's arm is no longer good for pitching, but it works fine for one of his favorite pastimes, fly-fishing in the Pacific Northwest.

**T**

**HE TALL RIGHTHANDER** draws his throwing arm back and then whips it forward, a motion honed over a lifetime on the pitcher's mound. A breeze cools his face as he works the angles and tries to entice his opponent to make a poor decision. But on this early-summer afternoon Adam Bernero isn't trying to get a hitter to chase a slider just off the plate. He's more than 300 miles from the nearest big league ballpark. Wearing waders instead of spikes, Bernero is standing thigh-deep in the

Upper Deschutes River in Bend, Ore., reaching back to load his fly-fishing rod and making one cast after another. The rainbow trout aren't biting, so he keeps moving and switching between wet flies (which sink to deeper waters) and dry ones (which stay on the surface and look like insect wings).

After a few hours, Bernero shakes his right hand. "My last two fingers get numb when I've been doing anything active," he says. "That's when I have to switch to my left hand." It becomes clear why he quit professional baseball in 2008, suddenly ending a seven-year career as a journeyman reliever after feeling a pop in his right elbow.

Eight years after undergoing Tommy John surgery (shorthand for ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction), Bernero, 38, still feels discomfort in the joint, which puts him in a fraternity that fans rarely think about: the up to 22% of players who never make it back from an injury now widely perceived as no more career-threatening than a hamstring pull or a strained oblique.



es





**WHEN PITCHERS** first hear of the high success rate of Tommy John surgery, they are comforted. Scores of major leaguers—position players as well as pitchers—have had UCL reconstruction and come back as good as new. Just look at current aces Matt Harvey, Stephen Strasburg and Adam Wainwright. But there is no consensus on the best way to measure the success of the surgery. A 2014 study published in *The American Journal of Sports Medicine* concluded that only 67% of pitchers return to the same level of proficiency as they had before the operation. And according to Jon Roegele, a sabermetrician who runs the database Tommy John Surgery List, one out of every two major league pitchers who has UCL reconstruction will throw fewer than 100 innings the rest of his career.

But for the guys whose arms just don't work right again—as many as 70 major leaguers (Roegele's number) since 1974, when orthopedic surgeon Frank Jobe first performed the surgery on Dodgers lefty Tommy John—life is never the same. “You hear all these reports on TV about guys coming back,” Bernero says, “but if it doesn't work, you're just kind of kicked off to the side. They never talk to you again.”

Bernero has fly-fished since he was a kid in Sacramento. His father would lift him by the back of his waders and carry him to safety if the current became too strong. When Bernero left baseball, he worked first as a summer fishing guide in Alaska, trying to get as far as possible from the game and the doctors. Most frustrating, he says, was that he had followed every part of the rehab procedure given to him by his renowned surgeon, James Andrews.

Before spring training of 2007, Andrews operated on Bernero's elbow, which had calcified from the stress of pitching. A year later Bernero's arm was still locked at a 90-degree angle. A surgical cleanup by Andrews helped with the pitcher's range of motion, and he returned to the mound in May '08, with the Pirates' Triple A affiliate in Indianapolis. Four pitches into his fourth start, his arm seized up and he felt a pop in his elbow. He knew his career was over, so he gritted his teeth to make the moment last, finishing two no-hit innings as he took it all in. His only thought: *I don't want to get off the mound.* As he sat in the dugout afterward, a coach asked, “Hey, Bernie, you throwing all changeups today?”

In September, Bernero will begin pursuing a master's degree in sports and performance psychology at the University of Denver. His initial focus will be on performance, but he believes he can have a greater impact by helping athletes prepare for retirement. “If I can gain players' trust and help them with their performance,” he says, “I can weasel my way in and say, ‘Hey, man, it's gonna end.’”

Another Tommy John casualty, relief pitcher Tim Lincecum, is already working with athletes. He's a pitching coach in Pensacola, Fla., putting eight- to 25-year-olds through lower-body training regimens to reduce the stress on their arms. One of his most devoted protégés is Zane Gill, a



*Bernero knew his career was over, so he gritted his teeth to make the moment last, finishing two no-hit innings as he took it all in. His only thought: I don't want to get off the mound.*

righthanded senior at Pensacola Catholic High with an 88-mph fastball and a commitment to Duke. He had Tommy John surgery in May 2014, and, according to Spooneybarger, he's pitching well again.

Spooneybarger, a key contributor on the Marlins' march to the 2003 World Series, had his right UCL rebuilt toward the end of that season. It took him 23 months to get back to the mound—“I never really felt good,” he says—and just four appearances into his rehab he felt something go wrong. Doctors told him he'd torn the tendon from the bone; then, during surgery, they discovered that the damage was worse than they



had thought, and they had to reconstruct the elbow again. When Spooneybarger woke up, he couldn't move his leg: The surgeons had taken part of his hamstring to use in his elbow.

Spooneybarger made it six games into his next rehab stint, in 2008, before seeing a doctor because of pain in his arm. He got a call back from the doctor while he was at the ballpark. "He told me I had torn my ligament for a third time," says Spooneybarger, now 35. "I dropped the phone, walked inside, got my stuff and drove home."



## BROKEN WINGS

Elbow reconstruction couldn't save the careers of Bernero (opposite) and (above, from left) Spooneybarger, Witt, Anderson, Christenson and Giese, who either reinjured their arms or hurt their shoulders after Tommy John surgery.

Brian Anderson reacted almost the same way to his second UCL tear, in 2008. Three years earlier, in spring training before his 13th big league season, he was diagnosed with severe tendinitis in his left elbow. He rested and rehabbed, but by early May the pain was unbearable. He was sitting on the bench grimacing after the second inning of a start in Baltimore when a Royals teammate alerted manager Tony Peña. Doctors later told Anderson he'd probably been pitching with a partially torn UCL since midway through the '04 season. By the time he had Tommy John, in June 2005, the elbow was shredded.

Disappointed by how quickly his season had ended, Anderson rushed back after the surgery, ignoring occasional tightness and soreness. Ten months after the anesthesia wore off, he was in a game for the Rangers in extended spring training. After only a dozen pitches he heard a sound like paper tearing, felt a sharp pain in his arm and walked off the mound. He didn't need anyone to tell him what was wrong. The second UCL surgery was scheduled for a year to the day after the first one; he got it pushed up a week for good luck.

Anderson was more careful in his second rehab stint, deciding early on that he'd take off the entire 2007 season no matter how good he felt. Going into spring training in '08, on a minor league contract with the Rays, he was confident he'd recovered, but in an appearance against the Yankees he tried to sneak a down-and-in fastball past Bobby Abreu and felt a burning sensation in his arm. Three pitches later he heard the familiar tear. He finished the inning but knew he wouldn't go back under the knife.

Now 43 and the Rays' color man on Sun Sports, Anderson has found in broadcasting much of what he missed about playing. There's constant work and a repeatable schedule, and when the producer counts down to a live shot Anderson gets almost the same rush of adrenaline that he felt before delivering the first pitch of a game. Like many other Tommy John casualties, he lacks full feeling in

the last two fingers of his throwing arm; he could be a position player in beer-league softball, he guesses, but he couldn't pitch even there.

Looking back, Anderson laughs at his naive reaction when he got the results of the MRI that led to his first surgery. *It's sad, but at least there's a plan of action*, he remembers thinking. *Doesn't everybody come back from Tommy John?*

**SOMETIMES THE** failure of Tommy John surgery is more roundabout: The procedure succeeds, but patients favor the reconstructed elbow and suffer career-ending shoulder injuries. Righthander Dan Giese, 38, spent nine years in the minors with four organizations before he was called up by the Giants. ("We don't have room for you here," his Triple A manager said, pausing to let Giese believe he was being released, "but we do have room up in San Francisco!") In May 2009 he was mostly a long reliever with his third team, the A's, when he noticed during a rain delay that his right arm was numb.

The season-ending surgery seemed to go well, but after a year of rehab Giese felt a sharp pain in his right shoulder. An MRI showed he had torn his labrum; the doctors stopped talking about getting him back to the big leagues and started talking to him about quality of life.

Mike Witt had a similar experience. A heralded Angels righthander who, at 24, threw a perfect game on the final day of the 1984 season, he started to wear down later in his career. He was traded to the Yankees in '90, and one wet night in Baltimore his landing foot slipped on the mound. "[That] made my throwing arm lag, and I felt my elbow pop," Witt says. After Tommy John surgery he too got through most of the rehab process before the shoulder pain took hold. He made nine excruciating starts in '93 and finally called it a career.

Witt is 54 and coaches baseball at Santa Margarita (Calif.) Catholic High. Even though he believes his heavy workload played a role in his injuries—"I look back and go, Maybe those 14 complete games in one year was not the smartest thing," he says—he tries not to coddle his young pitchers. In 20 years of coaching, he's never had a kid with an arm injury.

"We do have pitch counts," he says, "but at

## SI.COM

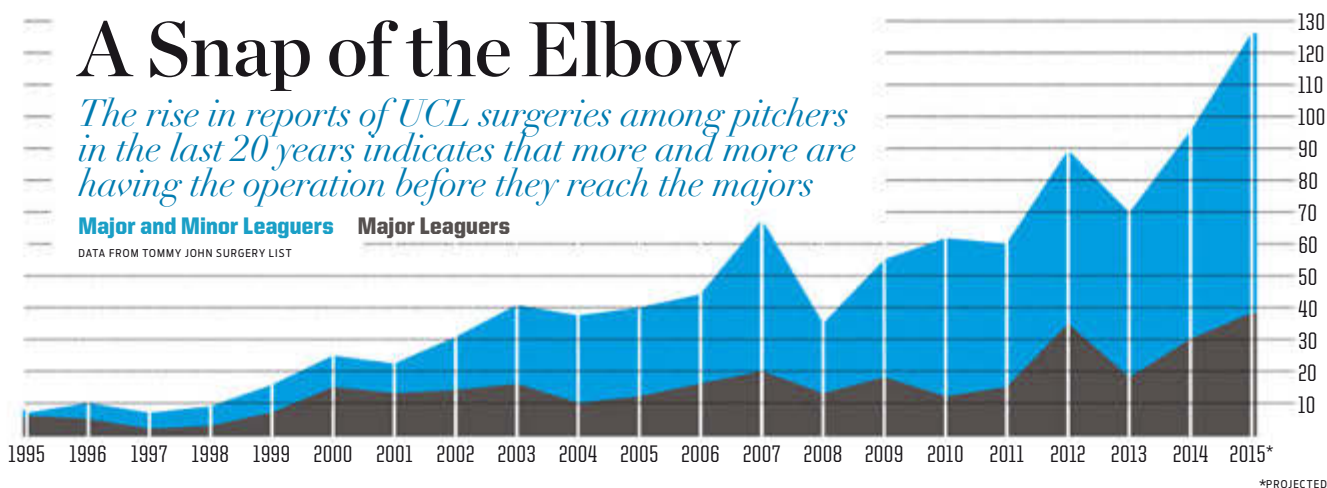
To learn how Angels pitcher Garrett Richards recovered from his knee injury, including video of the special equipment he used, go to [SI.com/thecomeback](http://SI.com/thecomeback)

# A Snap of the Elbow

*The rise in reports of UCL surgeries among pitchers in the last 20 years indicates that more and more are having the operation before they reach the majors*

Major and Minor Leaguers   Major Leaguers

DATA FROM TOMMY JOHN SURGERY LIST



## PATIENT ZERO

John (left, with Jobe) got the desired results from the surgery that would bear his name, earning more than half of his 288 career wins after the operation in 1974.

the same time I want them to go out there and have fun and enjoy competing and get a chance to get out of jams, and I don't want to baby kids. You learn how to pitch by pitching."

Larry Christenson was the Phillies' first-round pick in 1972 and spent his 11-year career in Philadelphia. He was born with a back defect, and he had four elbow surgeries and 27 bone spurs and chips removed before a variation on Tommy John surgery spelled the end for him. But he still finds a silver lining in his reputation for being injury-prone: He believes it lowered his trade value and kept him in the city he'd grown to love.

A friend in Christenson's home state of Washington introduced him to financial services, and Christenson, a high school graduate, dedicated himself to earning his Series 7 certificate. He opened Christenson Investment Partners in the Philly suburb of Conshohocken, Pa., in 2004. "I love this second career," says Christenson, 61. "It was better for me to get hurt early on. I was young enough to get involved in another field."

Meanwhile, about a dozen people in Southern California feel blessed that Giese was forced to quit baseball a few years earlier than he'd planned. Two years into his job as a policeman on the San Diego Harbor Patrol, in September 2012, Giese was returning from a graveyard shift when he and three other officers noticed smoke rising from a housing complex. They evacuated the sleeping residents and kept the flames under control until the fire department arrived.

Giese is now a pro scout for the Yankees, covering the Dodgers' and Astros' organizations from top to bottom, as well as various levels of five other teams. Despite his own injury history, he tries not to be gun-shy about arms. "If a pitcher has a high-maintenance delivery, I'll make note of it," he says, "but some guys with the best-looking deliveries have had Tommy John, and some guys with the craziest deliveries have not had Tommy John. There's just no way to know."

**T**HE UPTICK in Tommy John surgeries (chart) has become something of an epidemic, peaking at 104 major and minor league players in 2014. (Ninety-five of them were pitchers.) Baseball is on pace for 128 this year. Nearly a third of pitchers on active rosters have had to have their elbows reconstructed. Theories as to why abound—one is that players specialize earlier, and young pitchers throw more innings than they should—and countless studies have been commissioned, including one by MLB that will follow all first-year pitchers who joined the Dodgers', Mets', Phillies', Rockies' and White Sox' systems in '14. Researchers will track the pitchers' biomechanics, the range of motion in their arms and the number of innings they pitch in hopes of finding whether certain players are predisposed to UCL injuries. The study is being supervised by Glenn Feisig, research director of the American Sports Medicine Institute, which is run by Dr. Andrews. The hope is to expand the program from the current five to all 30 MLB teams.

No one knows why some athletes respond better to UCL reconstruction. Maybe surgical techniques vary fractionally. Maybe some bones can handle stress that others can't. Maybe for some pitchers the rehab process is simply too long—or too short. For guys like Adam Bernero, there's only a second career and a lot of second-guessing. "I always wonder if I didn't have surgery, if I could have pitched through it," Bernero says. "I think about it all the time."

He loads and releases his rod, keeping his casting arc between 10 and 2 o'clock. Suddenly the line pulls tight. He catches a trout, inspects it and pulls out the hook. Then he gently tosses it back. □





## THE SHANDY THAT STARTED IT ALL.

WHEN THE SUN'S BEATING DOWN,  
OUR LEINENKUGEL'S® SUMMER SHANDY®  
TASTES EVEN MORE CRISP AND REFRESHING.

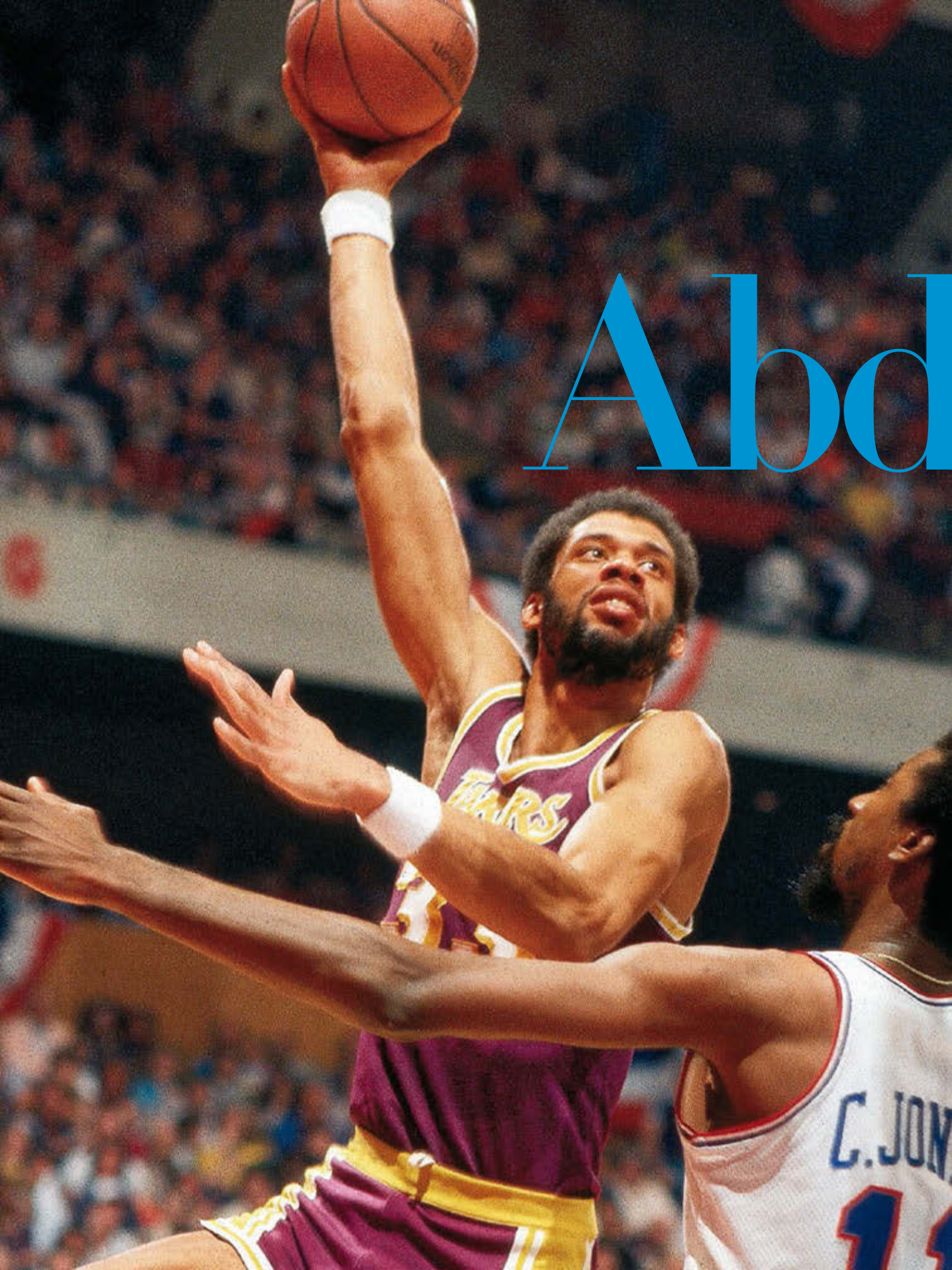
IT'S PERFECT FOR SUMMER,  
SO PICK ONE UP AND JOIN US OUT HERE®.



JOIN US AT [LEINIE.COM](http://LEINIE.COM) + FOLLOW US ON







Abd





# Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

*The Hall of Fame center who played with his back to the world was immersing himself in Malcolm X and Sherlock Holmes stories before tip-offs. Now he has grown comfortable sharing his insights on race, religion, sports and history as a public intellectual*

BY ALEXANDER WOLFF

Photograph by  
Manny Millan  
For Sports Illustrated

## SKY HIGH

Abdul-Jabbar won six rings (here vanquishing the 76ers' Caldwell Jones in L.A.'s 1980 Finals win) and retired in '89 as the NBA's all-time leading scorer.

KAREEM ABDUL-JABBAR haunts the NCAA Final Four once more, his body folded into a mezzanine skybox, a UCLA cap pulled low over a very high brow. During a break in the national semifinal between Duke and Michigan State, the jumbotron at Indianapolis's Lucas Oil Stadium displays a slide show of Final Four memories, and one image catches him by surprise—a shot from his days as a Bruin, wheeling into a skyhook.

"Well," he says, "look what we have here."

The photo popped up randomly, a message in a bottle from his past. But Abdul-Jabbar's comment could just as easily serve as a caption to the life he has settled into during his 60s. Look, indeed, at what we have here: 11 books, including memoir, history, detective fiction and juvenile novels; magazine articles published in everything from the socialist *Jacobin* to the resolutely Main Street *Rotarian*; a gig commenting on current events for *TIME* following a run as a pop culture columnist for *The Huffington Post*; two films about his life, including HBO's forthcoming *Kareem: A Minority of One*; and appearances on shows such as *Meet the Press*, where he'll pose questions such as, Why must peaceful Muslims like myself answer for violent perversions of that religion while their counterparts in other faiths get a pass? After years of trying to break back into the NBA as

a full-time assistant coach, Abdul-Jabbar, 68, has found both comfort and a calling as a man of letters and a public intellectual. “I’ve moved on,” he says. “At this point in my life I want to do things that are more important. I figure, I have a platform and a voice, so I might as well use it. And I’ve gone into it all the way. No half-step. Talk about ironies: I’m in this position now, the writer and not the target anymore.”

That journey has been a more challenging transition for the public to navigate than it has been for the NBA’s all-time leading scorer. As he put it in *On the Shoulders of Giants: My Journey Through the Harlem Renaissance*, the 2007 book on which his first film is based, “People don’t come up to me on the street and say, Hey, Kareem, got any suggestions about what I should read next? They don’t corner me at the airport and ask, What’s up with James Baldwin saying, ‘Artists are here to disturb the peace?’”

But someone who was once the very definition of the unapproachable athlete—whose humanity could be obscured by his seven feet, two inches, and what he admits was a cultivated aloofness—today shares the hope of most writers, that their words might find an audience and perhaps do the world some good. As he puts it, “Each story, novel, poem and play presents a vision of the world that illuminates

the dark cave of life we stumble through. We can see better where we’re going, what sudden drop to avoid, where the cool water is running.”



*Literature, says Abdul-Jabbar, “illuminates the dark cave of life we stumble through. We can see better where we’re going, what sudden drop to avoid, where the cool water is running.”*

**O**N THE way to becoming professional basketball’s most durably great center, Abdul-Jabbar traced a parallel journey as a reader and thinker that was easy to miss for all those inches and points. Through much of his career, he says, he resented that “the person the public was celebrating wasn’t the real me.” One of his many takeaways from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which he read as a freshman at UCLA, was a resistance to being defined by others. “[Malcolm] was the victim of institutional racism that had imprisoned him long before he landed in an actual prison,” Abdul-Jabbar has written. “That’s exactly how I felt: imprisoned by an image of who I was supposed to be.”

Before he became comfortable going public with his thoughts, young Lew Alcindor learned to form them in private. When he was three, in 1950, his parents, Cora and Ferdinand (Al) Alcindor, moved with their only child from Harlem to a public housing project in the Inwood section of Manhattan. There Lew would constantly ask questions of his father, a New York City transit cop and Juilliard-trained trombonist. Distant and taciturn, Al usually responded with a terse “Look it up.” So even as he became known as a basketball prodigy,

setting the city’s six major dailies abuzz and once posing for Richard Avedon, Lew learned to retreat with a book to his bedroom. With a view of the red-tile roof of the Cloisters, a museum built in the style of a medieval monastery, he felt like a monk with his texts.

At Power Memorial Academy, an all-boys Catholic high school, the basketball coach threw him into the varsity’s first game when Lew was a ninth-grader. In the locker room after Power was routed, a few of the older players laughed at the sight of their 6’ 10”, 14-year-old teammate in tears. “From that point on,” says Abdul-Jabbar, who changed his name in 1971, a few years after converting to Islam, “I never gave up any emotion or showed any vulnerability.”

But that didn’t mean he suddenly stopped having an emotional life. Beyond basketball he cultivated a dawning political consciousness, joining Power’s debate team and accessorizing his school blazer with buttons in support of civil rights groups like CORE and SNCC. As a 17-year-old he spent the summer of 1964 with

the Harlem Youth Action Project (HARYOU-ACT), a city-funded program whose goal was to identify promising young African-Americans and develop them as leaders. While Lew was detailed to a weekly community newspaper, HARYOU staffers like historian John Henrik Clarke introduced him to the writings of activists such as W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus

Garvey. Steps from HARYOU’s basement office in the YMCA annex off Lenox Avenue, Lew lost himself in the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature, History and Prints, discovering writers of the Harlem Renaissance and microfilm of old copies of *New York Amsterdam News*. That June, at a press conference during a visit to HARYOU, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King fielded a question from a very tall apprentice journalist.

Several weeks later, on a muggy Sunday in July, Alcindor walked up the stairwell of a subway station off 125th Street and into the sound of gunfire and the smell of smoke. He had wandered into a riot, set off by the shooting two days earlier of a black teen by a white police officer. He and the HARYOU newspaper staff scrambled to publish a special issue on the unrest. Alcindor marks his emergence from that subway station as his baptism as a man of the world. “I was born in Harlem in the summer of





1947,” he wrote in *On the Shoulders of Giants*. “I was reborn in Harlem in the summer of ’64.”

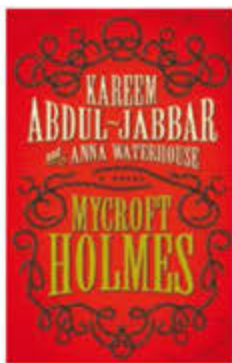
His intellectual development continued at UCLA, where an English professor singled out one of his essays, about a night out with a friend at New York City’s Village Vanguard jazz club, as the best in the class. To hear the teacher read it aloud gave Alcindor even more confidence. “You know how a light can go on, a sense of what you might be able to do?” he says. “I thought, Maybe I could write.”

Even the Bruins’ straitlaced, Indiana-born basketball coach had a role to play. Alcindor would throw questions about grammar and usage at John Wooden, a former English teacher who loved poetry. One day Wooden recited the work of the great Harlem Renaissance figure Langston Hughes. “I knew he could recite Elizabeth Barrett Browning,” says Abdul-Jabbar, who recalls the tightening of their bond in that moment. “But *Langston Hughes*—I was shocked.” Later, in his farewell to Lakers fans at the Forum in April 1989, Abdul-Jabbar would call out Wooden as someone who “taught me a whole lot about becoming a man, which had nothing to do with basketball. It had to do with living your life as an intelligent human being.”

Just before his rookie season with the Bucks, in 1969, someone gave Alcindor a collection of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories. He devoured it on the team’s first long road trip,

## CAP ’N GOWN

From his 1969 graduation ceremony at UCLA to his opining on *Meet the Press* and riffing on Conan Doyle, Abdul-Jabbar has always been a towering presence.



and the experience turned him into a devotee of detective fiction. Inspired by how Holmes eavesdropped on the Baker Street irregulars, the urchins who picked up scraps of information on the streets, he would listen in on the NBA’s ball boys and locker-room attendants for anything that might give him an edge—say, that Pistons center Bob Lanier sneaked a cigarette at halftime, which led Abdul-Jabbar to run him hard late in games.

Pregame, once dressed, he would settle in front of his locker with his nose in a book, usually fiction, until warmups began, setting his material aside only for a chalk talk or a reporter’s question. When Dave Zinkoff, the persnickety Philadelphia P.A. man, used *times out* as the plural of *timeout*, Abdul-Jabbar took approving notice.

In January 1983, during his 14-year run with the Lakers, a fire incinerated his Bel-Air, Calif., home and all his possessions—books, jazz albums, exotic rugs and personal effects. He has described the event as “a test for me, a kind of invoice from the universe.” The fire took place just as he was finishing up his first book, the autobiographical *Giant Steps*, and he regards the two milestones as leading a naturally introverted man—even the skyhook began with his back turned—to take a more welcoming posture toward the world.

The way forward wasn’t easy. Fearing that he had revealed too much of himself in *Giant Steps*, he briefly panicked, phoning his publisher to see if he could call the whole thing off. It was too late: Books were printed, bound and nearly out the door. But readers embraced the honesty of his self-

accounting, and he realized that opening himself up wouldn't necessarily leave him vulnerable or full of regret. As he says, "Your life is your life." And the support he received after the fire, which included gifts from strangers to help re-create his library and record collection, left him feeling, he says, like Jimmy Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life*. Memories of that time still help him make peace with the "public" part of being a public intellectual. "Writing my book was really the final act of getting that all out," he says. "Looking back on it now, the fire and its aftermath were like the final punctuation marks."

The range of Abdul-Jabbar's body of work since *Giant Steps* is astonishing. A 1992 encounter with an old transit-cop buddy of his father's, Leonard Smith, led to *Brothers in Arms*, a historical study of the all-black 761st tank battalion, in which Smith served during World War II. A lifelong engagement with jazz and literature animates both the book and the film versions of *On the Shoulders of Giants*. *Black Profiles in Courage* and *What Color Is My World?* collect inspirational stories about African-American leaders and inventors, respectively. A fascination with the West and with Native American culture—he's part Cherokee on his mother's side and Carib on his father's—led him to spend a season in Whiteriver, Ariz., living among the White Mountain Apache and coaching boys' high school basketball, which he chronicled in his 2000 memoir, *A Season on the Reservation*.

A Kareem project usually hits that sweet spot where history, the arts and the marginalized can be found, often with an appeal to African-American youth who, like the young Lew Alcindor, might not know that the world was shaped by people who looked like them. He posts his online commentaries with a newsman's instinct, whether weighing in on unrest in Baltimore ("When you lump [protesters and looters] together and call them all 'thugs,' you don't have to listen to the real issues") or Indiana's Religious Freedom Restoration Act ("Refusing service isn't an example of Christian love, but an example of shaming") or the massacre last week of nine African-Americans in a Charleston, S.C., church ("The pundit's and politician's best trick is to persuade us that racism doesn't exist so that it can continue to flourish"). He takes inspiration from Cornel West, the author and academic who weaves together threads of history, politics, religion and jazz. "He has a great eye for how all these things interact," says Abdul-Jabbar of West, who joined him on rambles through Harlem in the film version of *On the Shoulders of Giants*.

West returns the admiration. "My dear brother Kareem," he says, "is a giant of a man in morality and spirituality."

Like a well-rounded post man, Abdul-Jabbar can play high or low. In his commentaries he often makes literary allusions to support his points. He called Starbucks' recent, short-lived Race Together initiative naive but admirable, likening CEO Howard Schultz to the original Starbuck, the character in *Moby-Dick* who tries to mitigate Ahab's worst instincts. But the man whose appearance in *Airplane!* helped turn that movie into a pop cultural touchstone can get down and dirty, too, and give as good as he gets:

### SOMETHING BRUIN

Alcindor won three titles in three varsity seasons with Wooden, who also encouraged his young star's academic interests.



"What do people expect when an ex-jock discusses pop culture?" asks Abdul-Jabbar. "Hmmm. Magic light box have good shows. Me like some."

Programming on MTV, he wrote, resembles "an old man with a gray ponytail and fringed leather vest driving a red Corvette."

Abdul-Jabbar is amused that people don't expect him to be so conversant with the arts. As he once put it, "What do people expect when an ex-jock discusses pop culture? Hmmm. Magic light box have good shows. Me like some. Others make me puke Gatorade. Me give it three jock straps."

In fact, his memoirs shine with erudition and graceful phrases. The embrace he received from fans toward the end of his career was "late-autumn sunshine." That game program in Wooden's hand, he writes, was "rolled not



so much into a weapon as into a handle on the situation.” The Lakers’ chronic failures against the Celtics before Abdul-Jabbar’s arrival in Los Angeles made Jerry West “the tragic hero, like Hamlet, the fair prince of Denmark. Elgin [Baylor] was Falstaff. Wilt [Chamberlain] was Caliban. It was *Lakers Agonistes*.” As for being swept from the playoffs in his final NBA season, that abrupt elimination left him feeling like Cyrano de Bergerac, “an incomparable swordsman who would have been expected to go out in a sword fight with 50 men, but who instead died suddenly when a piece of timber fell from a roof gable and hit him on the head.

“Choosing our own fate is not an option open to us.”

**O**N APRIL 16, the day he turned 68, Abdul-Jabbar was scheduled to appear on a panel at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund’s 75th anniversary gala in Philadelphia. But the previous weekend he had noticed warmth around his heart while working out in his Marina del Rey, Calif., home, where he lives alone. His doctor gave him a stress test, then an angiogram. Two days later Abdul-Jabbar celebrated his birthday at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center with quadruple-bypass surgery.

He has suffered through enough health concerns for one lifetime. Chronic migraines that dogged him since adolescence haven’t been a problem since he had his uvula removed in 1997. But a diagnosis of leukemia in 2008 sent him into a brief panic, for he had recently lost a high school friend, the actor Bruno Kirby (*City Slickers*), to the disease. Abdul-Jabbar took comfort from one of his five children, son Amir, then in medical school and now an orthopedic resident at LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, who reassured him that thanks to advances in targeted therapies, many leukemias could be treated. A drug called Gleevec has allowed him to live a normal life, which helps explain why he turned up at the White House last January, joining President Obama to urge Congress to include \$215 million in its next budget for the development of precision medicine. “Fifteen years ago they didn’t have any of these treatments,” Jabbar says. “Even three years earlier, that diagnosis would have killed me.”

For two years Abdul-Jabbar’s Skyhook Foundation has been supporting a hands-on learning program of the L.A. Unified School District devoted to science, technology, engineering and mathematics. At Camp Skyhook, fourth- and fifth-

graders bivouac five days and nights in the Angeles National Forest. They might analyze water samples or explore a dove refuge or gaze at the stars. In late May, Abdul-Jabbar brought along as guests Richard Shemin and William Suh, the cardiologists who had just operated on his heart, to help get the students excited about careers in medicine. “Many of the kids come from areas where they can see the mountains, but they never get out of their neighborhoods,” he says. “And many come from places with different gang allegiances, but they end up making friends. We’re getting through to the kids at a time where they’re starting to think about what they want to do with their lives. It’s an experience like the one I had at HARYOU, and HARYOU changed my life.”



**I**T’S EARLY JUNE, and Abdul-Jabbar is back where he was twice born—in Harlem, at the Schomburg (now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture). He talks about his first novel for adults, *Mycroft Holmes*, which comes out in September. With action that shifts from the halls of London’s Westminster to the Trinidad of Al Alcindor’s parents, *Mycroft* backfills the story of Sherlock’s older and smarter brother, imagining him as a young adventurer with the British foreign service before life turns him into the sedentary recluse of the Conan Doyle canon.

“A novel!” Abdul-Jabbar says. “It’s a pretty good story.” He says this without boastfulness, but rather with an air of satisfied realization. It’s a sentiment most writers will recognize—that, after a long slog, the end product was worth the toil.

“We talked it through,” he says of his relationship with collaborator Anna Waterhouse, an L.A. script consultant. “Anna is very good at dialogue. I can describe a room, but she’s really good at *painting* a room. And when Anna couldn’t move the story, she’d come to me. I’d have ideas about plot and historical context.”

To help explain the diffident Mycroft of later life, Abdul-Jabbar imagined him suffering from a heart condition. Which is to say that life imitated art. Even if Abdul-Jabbar is right—if choosing our own fate isn’t an option open to us—the activist artist can use forethought and imagination to nudge this way and that all sorts of destinies, real-world and fictional alike. Or at least he can do so when he deploys all the letters of the alphabet, and doesn’t limit himself to X’s and O’s. □

#### MLK DAY

When King held a press conference at the Harlem Youth Action Project in 1964, he had a very tall teen hanging on his every word.



## Good Ol' Daze

→ BY STEVE RUSHIN

**"WHERE ARE THEY NOW?"** is the theme of this issue, and a question you'll eventually ask about your car keys, your reading glasses and your bursitis pills. When that day comes—when there are more years of life to look back on than forward to—you might be tempted to see the past as a Golden Age, when the world was young and professional basketball was still watchable.

Like this guy: "I don't go to basketball games often any more," said the Hall of Fame player. "It no longer is the game I used to know and love. It isn't basketball any more."

That player was Barney Sedran, a 5' 4" baller of the 1910s and '20s, speaking to Arthur Daley of *The New York Times* 63 years ago. The NBA had been known as the NBA for only three seasons by 1952, but it was already beyond redemption with the shameless aerial acrobatics of Dolph Schayes and the demon dribbling of Max Zaslofsky.

But that's how nostalgia works: In every age, the world was always better 40 years previously. This year's pillow fight between Floyd Mayweather and Manny Pacquiao couldn't hold a candle to the heavyweight slugfests of the 1970s. "The modern fighters are much inferior to the warriors of an earlier age," goes one hot take. "Rarely is a fighter rocked to sleep in the ring by the rousing punch of an opponent. If there is any sleeping, it is in the ringside seats." Sorry: That was in fact a column by John Kieran in the *Times* in 1931.

As humans, we really can't help ourselves. Idealizing the past is deeply ingrained in the species. Ancient Romans longed for a rural life that had already vanished for them. (*Exite ex horto*: "Get off my lawn!") The phrase "the good old days" appeared in print as early as 1726, shortly after print itself appeared. One can imagine living in the Renaissance, longing for the simplicity of the Dark Ages.

The word for all this—*nostalgia*—was coined in the 1680s by a Swiss physician named Johannes Hofer, and it originally described a medical pathology. Nostalgia was a sickness, a painful longing for home. Throwback jerseys, retro ballparks, the baseball cards in the basement, resistance to rules changes . . . it's all a form of homesickness.

Happily, that sickness is its own cure. A 2006 study by

As humans,  
we can't  
help but  
idealize  
the past:  
In every  
age,  
**the world**  
**was**  
**always**  
**better**  
40 years  
previously.



What aspects  
of the sports  
world are you  
*not* nostalgic  
for?

Join the  
discussion on  
Twitter by  
using  
**#SIPointAfter**  
and following  
**@SteveRushin**

researchers at the University of Southampton concluded that a good wallow in the past can alleviate depression and make the reminiscing party feel less alone. A Dutch study found that hearing an old favorite song made the listener feel physically warmer. Is it getting hot in here, or is that Nelly singing, "It's getting hot in herre"?

"Where are they now?" and "Where have you gone, Joe DiMaggio?" are variations of the same fundamental question. (It isn't a question reserved exclusively for old people—the young love their #Throwback-Thursdays.) As the world spins ever faster, sports change at a bewildering pace. "The rapidity and ease of modern communication have made the world more compact," notes one expert, and this technology—to cite but one example—has muted the "warm, exuberant, social side of golf [that] was, perhaps, more noticeable in the olden days." As a result, "The modern golfer is a busier man than his prototype of old."

So said *Golf Illustrated*, in 1903, and technology has rendered the world smaller still in the ensuing 112 years. As life speeds by, nostalgia has a shorter pregnancy. Games still in progress are given the straight-to-sepia status of "Instant Classics," no matter how oxymoronic that phrase appears.

And so sports fans can now reminisce about a game while it's happening. As American Pharoah crossed the Belmont finish line to win the Triple Crown, there was a smartphone camera interposed between every spectator and the spectacle before him, so that the race took on the quality of a Super 8 movie, more a memory to sock away for later consumption than a feat to behold live.

It's a strange nostalgia for the present, uploaded to Instagram, with a filter to make it look like a '70s Polaroid, so that seconds later we can look at what we just saw and say, as nature demands of us: Those were the days. □



SPORTS ILLUSTRATED (ISSN 0038-822X) is published weekly, with extra issues in February and August and skipped issues in January, February, April and July, by Time Inc. Principal Office: Time 6 Life Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, NY 10020-1393. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40110178. Return undeliverable Canada addresses through the UPM process: GST #R99361621R1001. U.S. Subscriptions: \$65 for one year. SUBSCRIBERS: If the postal service alerts us that your magazine is undeliverable, we have no further obligation unless we receive a corrected address within two years. Your bank may provide updates to the card information we have on file. You may opt out of this service at any time. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS. See DMM 7074.12.5. NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: send address corrections to Post Office Box 62121, Tampa, FL 33662-2121. MAILING LIST: We make a portion of our mailing list available to reputable firms. If you would prefer that we not include your name, please call or write us. ©2015 TIME INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. SPORTS ILLUSTRATED IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF TIME INC. CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SUBSCRIPTIONS: For 24/7 service, please use our website: [www.SI.com/customerservice](http://www.SI.com/customerservice) You can also call 1-800-528-5000 or write to SI at P.O. Box 62120, Tampa, FL 33662-2120.





NOW THAT'S A VARIETY SHOW.

new

Cookie Dough Swirl

Mint  
Chocolate Chip

OREO  
COOKIES & CREAM

Reese's  
PEANUT BUTTER CUP

HEATH  
MILK CHOCOLATE SWIRL AND NUTTY CREAM

SEE ALL 12 FLAVORS AT [KLONDIKEBAR.COM](http://KLONDIKEBAR.COM)

The REESE'S and HEATH trademarks and trade dress are used under license. OREO and the OREO Wafer Design are registered trademarks of Mondelez International group, used under license. © Unilever 2015





AdvisorNet

# Are You Ready?

**Thank Them. Salute Them. #GiveThem20**

1 million troops are coming home. Let's thank them for their service.

**1**

## Dedicate

20 push-ups, sit-ups, etc.  
to our returning veterans

**2**

## Challenge

your friends to make  
similar tributes

**3**

## Share

your video using  
**#GiveThem20**

**GiveThem20.org**

